

# **SELECTED PROTESTANT HISTORIC MONUMENTS AND SITES IN BULGARIA**



**United States Commission for  
the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad  
2013**



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## **Message from the Chair**

One of the principal missions that United States law assigns the Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad is to identify and report on cemeteries, monuments, and historic buildings in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe associated with the cultural heritage of U.S. citizens, especially endangered sites. The purpose is to help enable efforts to restore and preserve the properties. The Commission also seeks assurances from the governments of the region regarding the protection and preservation of these cultural heritage properties and encourages their restoration and maintenance.

The Commission strives to especially recognize endangered sites and monuments of groups who have suffered suppression of their cultural heritage due to ethnicity or religion. This report identifies and discusses sites and monuments associated with Protestant heritage in Bulgaria. The Protestant community is one of the country's largest minorities. It reports on a selection of important and representative churches.

The Governments of the United States and Bulgaria entered into a Commission-negotiated agreement regarding the protection and preservation of places of worship, historic sites, cemeteries, and memorials in 2002. The agreement covers sites identified in this report.

I hope that this report will enable Americans who trace their roots to Bulgaria to connect with their cultural heritage.

Lesley Weiss  
Chair



## **Acknowledgements**

Work on the survey that is the subject of this report was carried out in two main phases. During 2003, Professors Mark Stefanovich and Evelina Kelbetcheva collected historical information, which has been adapted to become the introductory section of this report.

During 2004 and 2005, Stephen Lewis carried out research, site visits, descriptions, and extensive photography of 100 selected cultural and religious sites.

Mr. Lewis relied on many others for information about the location, history, and condition of these and other sites, including Congregationalist Pastor Daniel Ignatov (Sofia); Methodist General Intendant and Pastor Bedros Altunian (Varna); Methodist Pastor Vladimir Todorov (Sofia); Baptist Pastor Theodore Oprenov (Sofia); and the Adventists' Bulgaria Central Office staff in Sofia.

The survey was organized and overseen by Samuel Gruber, who did the initial edit of this report. Justin Rhea of the Jewish Heritage Research Center, which he heads, assisted him. Jeffrey L. Farrow, Katarina A. Krzysztofiak, and Sarah Roosa also assisted with the survey and the preparation and publication of this report. Then Commission Chairman Warren L. Miller and Commission Members Ned W. Bandler and Michael Levy were particularly supportive of the project.

The Commission also thanks former Ambassador James W. Pardew and the staff of the United States Embassy in Sofia for their assistance.

Front cover photo: Methodist Church in Russe, built in 1883. Also known as the Evangelical Methodist Episcopal Church.



## Table of Contents

<b>About the Survey and this Report.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>A Note on Survey Methodology.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Selection of Sites.....	1
Exclusion of Sites.....	1
Report Methodology.....	2
<b>I. Protestants in Bulgaria.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Introduction.....	3
Summary of Protestant Groups in Bulgaria.....	3
<b>II. Protestant Cultural Monuments.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Table of Protestant Churches Surveyed by Denomination.....	7
<b>III. Descriptions of Protestant Sites.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Sofia: Evangelical Methodist Church.....	10
First Evangelical Congregational Church.....	14
First Baptist Church.....	17
Church of the Union of Seventh-Day Adventists.....	19
Prayer House of the Church of the Adventists of the Seventh-Day.....	21
Evangelical Cemetery.....	22
Akhmatova: Evangelical Congregational Church.....	24
Apriltsi: Evangelical Congregational Church.....	25
Asenovgrad: Evangelical Church.....	27
Bansko: Evangelical Congregational Church, or Slovoto ('The Word').....	29
Pastor's House for Evangelical Congregational Church.....	31
Banya: Evangelical Congregational Church.....	33
Dobrich: Christian Adventist Church.....	35
Haskovo: Evangelical Congregational Church.....	36
Kamena Reka: Evangelical Church and Evangelical Cemetery.....	38
Khotantsa: Methodist Church.....	42
Khotantsa (District of Russe): Methodist Cemetery.....	44
Lovech: Methodist Evangelical Church.....	46
American Young Women's College.....	48
Merichleri: Evangelical Congregational Church.....	50
Evangelical Pentecostal Church.....	52
Panagyurishte: Evangelical Church & Pastor's House.....	53
Pazardjik: Evangelical Congregational Church.....	55
Pazardjik (Tserevo): Evangelical Congregational Church.....	57
Pleven: Methodist Evangelical Church.....	59
Methodist Evangelical Pastor's House.....	62
Plovdiv: Evangelical Congregational Church.....	64
Evangelical Baptist Church.....	67
Adventist Church.....	68
Plovdiv-Komatovo: Evangelical Congregational Church.....	69
Popovitsa: Evangelical Congregational Church.....	71
Russe: Church of the Adventists of the Seventh-Day.....	73

Evangelical Baptist Church.....	74
Methodist Church.....	75
Samokov: Evangelical Congregational Church.....	77
Shumen: Methodist Pastor’s House.....	79
Methodist Church.....	81
Strakhilovo: Former Methodist Evangelical Church.....	84
Veliko Turnovo: Evangelical Methodist Church.....	85
Former Evangelical House of Prayer (“Molitven Dom”).....	87
<b>Appendix I: Agreement Between the United States and Bulgaria.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Appendix II: Bibliography.....</b>	<b>95</b>



## **About the Survey and this Report**

The purpose of the survey was to collect information about the history, art, architecture, and condition of many historic sites of significance to religious and ethnic minorities in Bulgaria. It collected detailed data on approximately 150 important and representative sites throughout that are part of the cultural heritage of Protestant Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Roma. Separate reports about Jewish and Muslim sites in Bulgaria have been published. This report presents information on Protestant sites, many having connections with 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century American missionaries, educators, and churches.

## **A Note on Survey Methodology**

### **Selection of Sites**

Sites were organized into a series of travel routes and districts to be covered. Mr. Lewis' routes were drawn to cover as close to all of the Protestant sites as possible, plus as many significant Muslim and Roma sites as possible. Routes and selected sites were updated over the course of fieldwork. The travel routes enabled the achievement of a fairly broad and representative geographic coverage of Bulgaria. Members of local communities surveyed Jewish sites separately.

Districts and travel routes included:

1. Sofia and surroundings
2. Sofia-Iktiman-Pazardjik-Panagyurishte
3. Plovdiv and surroundings
4. Sofia-Bansko-Gotse Delchev and points between
5. Sofia-Russe-Ispirikh-Shumen-Turgovishte and points between
6. Sofia-Haskovo-Topolovgrad and points between
7. Sofia-Pleven-Lovech-Turnovo-Razgrad and points between
8. Sofia-Nova Zagora-Kamena Reka-Stara Zagora and points between
9. Sofia-Balchik-Dobrich and points between
10. Sofia-Belogradchik-Lom-Berkovitsa
11. Sofia-Kyustendil
12. Sofia-Kazanluk

### **Exclusion of Sites**

Organization of work into cost and time-effective routes also entailed compromises, including not covering three far-flung Protestant sites, each without worthy Muslim or Roma sites in their surroundings. These were: the former Baptist Church at Gabrovo (for decades a puppet theater), the Congregational Church at Sliven, and the former Congregational Church at Burgas (today a Pentecostal church). Whenever possible, an attempt was made to inspect the interior as well as exterior of each monument visited.

## **Report Methodology**

Historical and conceptual background for the survey was prepared by researchers at the American University of Bulgaria (AUBG) under the direction of Professors Mark Stefanovich and Evelina Kelbetcheva, and submitted in the form of a report to the Commission at the end of 2003. A substantial amount of this material is included as introductory sections of this report. The AUBG report was subsequently used as the primary planning document for more intensive surveys of Protestant and Jewish sites in Bulgaria, and a representative survey of Muslim sites. Using this information and other resources, Steven Lewis compiled a detailed database of historic sites in Bulgaria and developed the itineraries for the field survey.

Comments and other information on the condition of all monuments are based on Stephen Lewis' personal observations and discussions with local pastors, caretakers, community members, and others.

Information in the report is current as of the time of the survey.

# **I. Protestants in Bulgaria**

## **Introduction**

Protestant missionaries from various denominations appeared in Bulgaria at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The majority came from the United States to work with the non-Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire. Their impact is felt through three major initiatives. First was the publication in 1871 of the Bible in modern Bulgarian by American missionaries and Bulgarian intellectuals. This work, aside from its religious impact, helped codify the modern Bulgarian language. Second was the establishment of Robert College in today's Istanbul, which educated many leaders in the region. Third were the Protestant missionaries who were influential in the establishment of schools in Plovdiv, Samokov and Stara Zagora.

Missionaries also established lay and evangelical newspapers, as well as fellowships for Bulgarian students to go to America. Education, charitable organizations, and youth clubs were the basis for the most successful activities.

Today, Protestant denominations are the fastest growing religious communities in Bulgaria. For example, in 1989 there were 25,000 registered Protestants; in 1998, this number had risen to 120,000. In contradistinction, during the period of Communist rule, the Protestant communities were forcefully persecuted, suffering confiscation of property, closure of prayer houses, and incarceration of priests in prison and concentration camps. Religious services were banned. After 1989, the Protestant Alliance was formed in Sofia. One of the principal aims was to link with the Protestant centers in Western Europe and the United States. Members received assistance from their respective Protestant denominations – material, financial, technical, managerial, and missionary. Through these newly established connections, the Bulgarian Protestant denominations became part of the worldwide network.

## **Summary of Christian Protestant Groups in Bulgaria**

### **Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches**

The First Baptists came to Bulgaria around 1866 as booksellers of the British and American Bible societies. Their first churches were located in Kazanlak, Lom, and Russe. After 1878, churches were also built in Sofia, Varna, Chirpan, and Assenovgrad. The first Baptist Church with a Roma priest was founded in Golentsi near Lom at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After 1944, the Baptists suffered the same forms of Communist repression as had the other Protestant denominations – confiscation of property and incarceration of pastors. Twelve pastors were sentenced to between 8 and 12 years of imprisonment. There were about 800 followers at the time.

Today, the Union of Evangelical Churches is registered with the state and includes 40 churches and approximately 3,000 members in over 60 towns and villages, mostly in

Western Bulgaria. Their main activities are concentrated in the Good Samaritan Foundation, which supports orphanages and homes for the elderly. Additional activities include Sunday schools, women's ministries, and Bible study classes. Future church leaders can study in the Baptist Bible Institute.

## **Union of the Evangelical Congregational Churches (Congregationalist)**

The first Congregationalists arrived in Bulgaria in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, led by the American Board for Supervising Foreign Missions. Their activities were first centered in Plovdiv and Stara Zagora. They opened a secular school in 1860 in Plovdiv. The first Bulgarian grammar textbook used by the missionaries was published in Smyrna in 1844, and was written in English and Bulgarian by Dr. Elias Riggs. Charles Morse published the earliest English-Bulgarian and Bulgarian-English dictionary in Istanbul in 1860.

The first Congregationalist church was founded in Bansko in 1868. In 1930, the church had about 1,000 members in 30 congregations. After 1944, three of the Protestant pastors were sentenced to the same fate as those of the other Protestant denominations. In the 1980s, the number of followers was approximately 2,000 in 25 groups with 24 pastors. Today, there are about 3,500 Congregationalists in 33 local churches in Sofia and mainly in the south of Bulgaria. The Congregationalist Church supports hospitals, kindergartens, and soup kitchens for the needy. It has medical services that offer free diagnoses and it also gives free legal services.

## **Evangelical Methodist Episcopal Church**

The first Methodist missionaries in Bulgaria settled in Shumen in 1857. In 1864, Dr. Albert Long started the journal, *Zornica*, followed in 1876 with a newspaper of the same name – the first Bulgarian Evangelical newspaper. During the following years, Methodist churches were established throughout northern Bulgaria. Schools were opened; the most famous was the American School for Girls in Lovech, begun in 1882. In 1890, there were some 120 Methodist believers and in 1938 there were about 800. After the Communist takeover, ten Methodist pastors were sentenced to jail. Until 1979, there were 13 churches ministered by 15 pastors.

Today the Methodist Evangelical Church has about 2,000 members in 25 communities, mainly in Sofia, Shumen, Varna, Lovech, Russe, and neighboring villages. Their main activities are similar to the other Protestant denominations. They are a sub-division of the United Methodist Church, which is member of the All European Evangelical Church.

Dr. Long (together with Dr. Riggs and a number of leading Bulgarian literary and intellectual figures) also made lasting contributions to the shaping of Bulgarian national identity, religious experience, and education. Specifically, Drs. Long and Riggs were involved in the translation of the Old and New Testaments into the Bulgarian vernacular. This was a major step forward in the development and standardization of the national

language. It made the Bible available to laymen of whatever religion or domination. The role of the Methodist and Congregationalist missionaries in establishing colleges (Lovech and Samokov) was also seminal to the development of middle and higher education in Bulgaria, and extended the role of Robert College in the intellectual development of Bulgaria.

That the Sofia Methodist Church bears the name of Dr. Long makes that edifice and its congregation symbolic of a deep and important contribution of Americans and America's ethos to what is now Bulgaria.

During the late Ottoman period, Congregationalists and Methodists divided Bulgaria into two non-official spheres of influence. The Methodists were to evangelize in the north of the country and the Congregationalists in the south. In this sense, Sofia's Methodist Church is in 'foreign' territory. Because it was located in the capital of Bulgaria, it was well-endowed (witness the size and splendor of the building and the scope of the unrealized plan for a separate church.) During the inter-war period, the church was an important force and venue in Sofia's intellectual life, a role promoted by its pastor, who was able to flee to the United States after the Communist dictatorship Pastors' Trial of the late 1940s.

Freedom to proselytize amongst Christians and to practice Protestantism was guaranteed under Ottoman rule. After the independence of Bulgaria, the situation became more complex. Being Protestant became suspect and the object of periodic persecution. Bulgarian nationalism stresses Bulgarian language and membership in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church as the preconditions for Bulgarian identity. This was the case under the monarchy and, despite official atheism, under the Communist Party dictatorship. It remains the case today, although open hostility is at a low level. Still, Protestant denominations are as often as not referred to by Orthodox Bulgarians as "cults."

## **Union of the Evangelical Pentecostal Churches**

Russian missionaries established the first Pentecostal Church in Burgas in 1920. In 1928, Pastor Nikolay Nikolov, from the Bible Institute in Missouri, launched the Union of the Pentecostal Churches (UEPC) in Bulgaria. Presently, according to data from the UEPC, there are Pentecostal Churches in some 450 villages and approximately 50,000 believers, of whom about 20,000 are considered active members. Similar to the Pentecostal Church is the Church of God, with two subdivisions – Bulgarian Church of God and the United Church of God. The leadership claims a membership of at least 25,000 in each. Between 1944 and 1989, there was a radical underground group called the Tinchevisti whose successors are members of the United Church of God.

## **Lutheran Church**

The first Lutheran Evangelical community was established in 1879 with the help of Alexander Battenberg, the first Prince of Bulgaria. It was active until 1944. American missionaries from the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod established the present Lutheran Church registered in 1994. This church has about 75 baptized members. The main activities of the church are worship services, Sunday school, Bible school for adults, and Bible study summer camps. A medical mission set up by the church provides services to orphanages and homes for the elderly. The church also runs two stores with subsidized prices for the poor. They are active in Sofia, Vidin, and neighboring villages.

## **Church of the Seventh-Day Adventists**

The earliest Adventists who came to Bulgaria were German immigrants from Crimea who settled in Dobrudja in 1891. The first member of the Adventist Church is reputed to have been a converted Jew, Jacob Greenberg, who was baptized in Russe in 1892. In 1924, the publishing house, “Nov Zhivot” (New Life), was established. It gave new impetus to the publishing activities and recruitment of new members. In the same year, the first Adventist Church was built in Sofia. When the survey was conducted, the church still served the faithful and acted as the headquarters for church activities. In 1936, together with the Sofia Municipality, the Adventist Church opened its first summer camp for underprivileged children in Svoge. In 1945, there were 1,344 Adventists in Bulgaria. Later, new places of worship were built in Gabrovo, Dobrich, and Stara Zagora. A few years later, a middle school was added to the activities in Svoge.

During the early 1950s, the Communist Party regime began to pressure the church to curtail its activities and elections for church authorities were banned. The publishing houses and the middle school in Svoge were forced to close and many of the church’s properties were confiscated. The secret police also confiscated the church archives. Many of the confiscated churches were used for new purposes. For example, the church in Gabrovo was rededicated as an Atheist Center, later demolished, then rebuilt as a puppet theatre. In Sofia, a small church was demolished and an administrative building was built in its place. Churches in Tutrakan and Silistra on the Danube, Burgas, Pazardjik, and Kjustendil were torn down. In Turgoviste, the municipality confiscated the church but offered compensatory land for a new church in the cemetery, where it is still located. In Varna, an important church was also confiscated.

Since 1989, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church has been officially registered with the Department of Religious Denominations at the Council of Ministers as a traditional Protestant denomination. Today, the church has 7,300 followers organized in 116 churches. The publishing house, Nov Zhivot, was reopened in 1992. Among the church’s activities today are the youth organization (created in 1921), a children’s club, Bible study groups, and summer camps. The Adventist Church is also linked to the

Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) that has humanitarian projects, distributes agricultural seeds, and plans in the future to build a health center and a retirement home.

## II. Protestant Cultural Monuments

The survey visited and collected information on the following 56 Protestant historic sites and monuments in Bulgaria established before the Second World War and the advent of the Communist Party dictatorship.

**Table of Protestant Churches Surveyed by Denomination**

<b>Denomination</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Year Built</b>
Baptist	Sofia	Church	1923
Baptist	Plovdiv	Church	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> / early 20 <sup>th</sup> century
Baptist	Russe	Church	1897
Congregationalist	Sofia	Church	1879 / rebuilt 1947
Congregationalist	Sofia	Pastor's house	Early 1930s
Congregationalist	Sofia	Cemetery	Before 1944
Congregationalist	Akhmatova	Church	After 1903
Congregationalist	Apriltsi	Church	1911
Congregationalist	Apriltsi	Pastor's house	1930
Congregationalist	Asenovgrad	Church	1947
Congregationalist	Asenovgrad	Pastor's house	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> / early 20 <sup>th</sup> century
Congregationalist	Bansko	Church	1868
Congregationalist	Bansko	Pastor's house	1900
Congregationalist	Banya	Church	Early 20 <sup>th</sup> century
Congregationalist	Haskovo	Church	1880s
Congregationalist	Kamena Reka	Church	1875 / rebuilt 1939

<b>Denomination</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Year Built</b>
Congregationalist	Kamena Reka	Cemetery	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> / early 20 <sup>th</sup> century
Congregationalist	Merichleri	Church	1932
Congregationalist	Merichleri	Pastor's house	1935
Congregationalist (now Pentecostal)	Panagyurishte	Church	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> century
Congregationalist (now Pentecostal)	Panagyurishte	Pastor's house	Early 20 <sup>th</sup> century
Congregationalist	Pazardjik	Church	1910
Congregationalist	Pazardjik	Church	1928
Congregationalist	Pazardjik	Pastor's house	Predates church
Congregationalist	Plovdiv	Church	1903
Congregationalist	Plovdiv	Pastor's house	1950
Congregationalist	Plovdiv-Komatovo	Church	1930
Congregationalist	Plovdiv-Komatovo	Pastor's house	1950
Congregationalist	Popovitsa	Church	1930
Congregationalist	Popovitsa	Pastor's house	1930
Congregationalist	Samokov	Church	1880s
Congregationalist	Samokov	Pastor's house	1980s
Methodist	Sofia	Church	1924
Methodist	Khotantsa	Church	1927
Methodist	Khotantsa	Pastor's house	1920s or 30s
Methodist	Khotantsa	Cemetery	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> century
Methodist	Lovech	Church	1940
Methodist	Lovech	Attached pastor's apartment	1940



<b>Denomination</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Year Built</b>
Methodist	Lovech	Women's college	1881
Methodist	Pleven	Church	1912
Methodist	Pleven	Pastor's house	1916
Methodist	Russe	Church	1883
Methodist	Russe	Pastor's house	1876
Methodist	Shumen	Church	1895
Methodist	Shumen	Pastor's house	Predates church
Methodist	Strakhilovo	Church	1890s
Methodist	Strakhilovo	Attached pastor's house	1890s
Methodist	Veliko Turnovo	Church	1859
Methodist	Veliko Turnovo	Church ruin	19 <sup>th</sup> century
Pentecostal	Merichleri	Church	1939 / 1940
Pentecostal	Merichleri	Pastor's house	1940s
Seventh-Day Adventist	Sofia	Church	1925
Seventh-Day Adventist	Sofia	Church	Early 20 <sup>th</sup> century
Seventh-Day Adventist	Dobrich	Church	Early 20 <sup>th</sup> century
Seventh-Day Adventist	Plovdiv	Church	1930s
Seventh-Day Adventist	Russe	Church	1927

Baptist = Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches

Congregationalist = Union of the Evangelical Congregational Churches

Methodist = Evangelical Methodist Episcopal Church

Pentecostal = Union of the Evangelical Pentecostal Churches

Seventh-Day Adventists = Church of the Seventh-Day Adventists

### **III. Descriptions of Protestant Sites**

#### **Sofia**

##### **Evangelical Methodist Church**

ul. G.S. Rakovsky 86

The church, begun in the early 1920s and completed in 1924, is within a four-story (plus basement and sub-basement) single building in a small courtyard surrounded by residential apartment blocks. The fifth story is an addition from the 1990s and is an expansion of the former attic. The building forms a complex containing the sanctuary with original (1920s) integrated audiovisual projection room, offices, meeting rooms, kitchen and dining hall, pastorate, guest apartment, etc.

Apparently, the original site of the Methodist Evangelical Church in Sofia is where the Narodna Sobraniye (National Assembly building) has now stood for more than a century, and where the Orthodox Seminary is also located. This property, which is now one of the central locations of Sofia, was then at the outskirts of the city. The government and the Orthodox Church pressured the Evangelicals to cede the land in return for a large parcel near the corner of Rakovska and Dondukov Streets, part of which has become the site for the present church building.



**Entrance, apartment building, and tunnel.**



**Archival photo, prior to building of surrounding blocks. The massive stair and bell tower to the right is no longer visible as the entire right side of the church building is blocked by an adjacent building.**

The existing building was planned as part of a large complex that was to include a larger, separate church, an idea that was abandoned as financial support from the Methodist Church in the United States declined and then ceased during the early years of the Great Depression of the 1930s. To meet its financial needs, the church eventually sold off the balance of its large plot of land to private and cooperative apartment developments. This resulted in its present isolation from the street line and public view, and a small courtyard. Although the building cannot be seen from the street, direct access is afforded by a street level passageway under and through the apartment block between the church building and the street-line. The large bell tower at the right of the building is now obscured by an adjacent building.

The palazzo-style structure is a well executed and richly ornamented building with an eclectic façade and interior that incorporates elements of many historical styles. Interior woodwork, stonework, and ironwork are particularly impressive. The proportions, detailing, and light of the sanctuary are inspiring.

The building has been restored on several occasions since democracy in 1989. During the Communist Party period (note that the church was seized in 1950 following the Pastors' Trial), the church building ceased to operate as such, but was eventually used as a storage place with its sanctuary used as the rehearsal and performance site of a choral group. Ironically, this froze the building in time and ensured its preservation in a relatively original state. The only modifications made to the building during the Communist period were superficial, i.e. the painting of fine wooden doors, doorjambs, etc. with cheap oil-based paint that has since been burnt and scraped away. The woodwork, just like the rest of the building, has been restored to original appearance. During the 1990s, the attic of the building was enlarged into a full fourth floor to provide additional apartment space. Because this modification is set back from the façade, it does not compromise the building's original appearance.

As mentioned, the present church was not meant to be the main sanctuary. Rather, it was probably intended as a youth and cultural center with its own chapel, which could also serve as meeting hall and, quite innovatively for the 1920s, as a cinema.

This large building is wider than it is deep and has its façade and central entranceway along its lengthy lateral axis. It is approximately 22 meters wide at the façade side and 25 meters at the rear (note that approximately 40 percent of the façade is obscured by an apartment building abutting directly against it). It is 16 meters long and approximately 17.5 meters tall (the basement and sub-basement add five or more meters).

The general layout of the building allows access to the ground floor through a centered entrance that leads to a lateral foyer that runs most of the width of the building. Behind the foyer are offices, a youth center, etc. This pattern of foyer in front and rooms behind is repeated in the basement and on the second and third floors, which house the two-story-high sanctuary. On the second floor, the foyer comprises a lateral vestibule to the sanctuary. On the third floor, the foyer space comprises the (lateral) upper gallery of the church. The third floor also contains two apartments; one used as pastor's dwellings and the other for guests. One of the apartments, now used by the current pastor and family, is set in the former bell tower. A basement provides additional meeting space. The building also has a sub-basement with a boiler for an innovative (but non-functioning) 1920s vacuum heating system. The building has for years been connected to Sofia's costly and inefficient municipal heating grid. Throughout the building there is distinctive decoration: excellent woodwork; stone floors; and ornamental ironwork in stairways.

No repairs are needed, but the church would benefit from an elevator to permit the elderly and infirm to make full use of the four-story structure and access to the second floor sanctuary.



Entranceway and streetscape looking down Rakovska towards Dondukov St. and the envisioned site of the larger church, which was never built.



Sanctuary, towards apse.



**Lateral view of 1<sup>st</sup> floor (parterre) foyer.**

## **First Evangelical Congregational Church**

ul. Solunska

Originally called the First Evangelical Church, the First Evangelical Congregational Church of Sofia is a member of the Union of Evangelical Congregational Churches, which also owns the church building.

The First Evangelical Congregational Church of Sofia is one of the first Protestant churches in Bulgaria, with only the Evangelical Congregational Church at Bansko possibly supplanting it as the movement's oldest congregation in the country. The church's simple neo-gothic façade and tall bell tower have been recognizable features of the Sofia streetscape for more than 120 years.

It consists of the original, freestanding 19<sup>th</sup> century church with a modern (post-1989) two-story chancellery built onto the rear of the church. In addition, a small freestanding, three-story apartment building dating to the interwar period (apparently from the early 1930s) was built to house the pastor of the church. Also belonging to the church are a two-story building, formerly a storage shed but rebuilt in the 1990s, that now contains meeting rooms and a prayer hall/chapel, which serves as the church of the Armenian Evangelical Church, as well as a freestanding, single-story building constructed in the 1990s and rented by the church to a secular bookstore.

The building was originally constructed by the Union of Evangelical Churches in 1879 (the date over the door of the church, 1864, refers to the founding of the congregation and not the construction of the edifice). The entire church building (i.e. the single-nave, basilica-shaped sanctuary) was destroyed during the Anglo-American bombing of Sofia in 1943-44. Only the vestibule and bell tower were left standing. The church was fully rebuilt soon after the war (1946-1947) and then renovated during the 1990s. Also during the 1990s, a flat wooden ceiling was added to the main sanctuary.

The church can be accessed directly from public space: It is set back from the present-day street-line but is accessible through a small courtyard. A small, modern structure currently housing a bookstore faces directly onto the street. The pastor's house and the meeting house containing the Armenian Evangelical chapel are accessible through the private space of the complex.

The building plan is rectangular (approximately 20 by 10.5 meters) with an entrance on the short side. The interior floor to ceiling height is roughly seven meters, and from the floor to the balcony is roughly 3.5 meters. The roof is tiled but the exterior stucco finish makes it unclear what the larger structure is made from, though wood and brick are possibilities. It forms a single-nave, pitched-roof basilica with a separate vestibule surmounted at the entrance by a bell tower (roughly 17 meters from ground to top of tower). Stylistically, it might be described as Romanesque with neo-Gothic elements. If it were made of wood or exposed brick rather than finished in stucco, it would not look out of place in New England or other parts of America.

The church's bell tower is among its distinctive features, as is the iron-fenced courtyard, which one enters from the street and the vestibule under the tower used to enter the main sanctuary. Exterior decorative elements include buttresses on the lateral walls (which are perhaps structural as well) and *Jugendstil* (German Art Nouveau) ironwork in its windowpanes. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century floor tiling in the vestibule decorates the interior.

The church building was affected by dampness running across the top of the exterior of both lateral walls. Dampness appeared to be caused by faulty gutters in need of replacement. The interior and exterior plastering and painting was worked on at the time of this survey. The top stories of the building were renovated to serve as the pastor's residence, while the ground floor would serve as a meeting room. According to the pastor, the main sanctuary was in need of fire exits.



**Façade.**



**Side view with tower.**





Interior, facing altar.



Interior (side).

## First Baptist Church

ul. Osogovo 63

The history of the Baptist Church in Bulgaria dates to the 1870s. This is the first Baptist Church built in the Bulgarian capital. The First Baptist Church also describes itself in the

sign over its entrance as simply a “Christian Baptist Church.” It is affiliated with the Baptist Union of Bulgaria, which also owns the building, and was constructed in 1922-1923, partially with financial support from American and German Baptists. Offices were later built onto the rear of the church. A partial restoration, along with some modifications, was made during the early 1990s. The modifications included a lowered ceiling and recessed lighting in the sanctuary, the installation of a ventilation system, and the enlargement of windows.

The building is slightly stepped back from the present-day street line, but is directly accessible from the street. Entrance to offices at the rear of the building is through a narrow alleyway along the right side of the sanctuary. The building is rectangular (approximately 11 by 8 meters, 15 by 8 including the vestibule), with its main entrance on the short length of the rectangle. It is approximately six meters high (or eight meters to pitch of roof) and made of brick or wood covered in stucco and roofed with tile, coming together to form a single-nave, pitched-roof basilica with a balcony in the main sanctuary and a small vestibule immediately behind entrance. The vestibule is flanked to the left by a small office and to the right by the stairway to the balcony in the rear of the sanctuary. The entranceway is preceded by a small portico.

Exterior decoration is minimal and simple. Faux columns and pediment give a neo-classical touch, as does the stairway to the main entranceway. White-painted geometric decorative elements on the façade are typical of Secession and *Jugendstil* touches widely used in modestly-budgeted residential and commercial structures built in Bulgarian cities and towns during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



**Façade.**



Interior, facing altar.

## **Church of the Union of Seventh-Day Adventists**

ul. Solunska 10

Also known by its address, Solunska 10, the Church of the Union of Seventh-Day Adventists is owned by the Union of Seventh-Day Adventist Churches.

The church complex consists of the main building and a secondary structure. The main building is a four-story structure fronting the street. From the outside, it appears to be a typical Sofia apartment or office building dating to the interwar period. In fact, the building houses both the offices and the sanctuary of the church. The second structure is in the courtyard behind the main structure. Its location and appearance show the second structure to be a mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century three-story house conforming to the pre-modern street plan of Sofia (i.e., the plan prior to the 1880s). This structure now serves as the church's guest house.

The church site was purchased in 1924. The building was constructed during 1924-1925 by the Union of Seventh-Day Adventist Churches, Bulgaria, originally known as the Bulgarian Temperance Society. Initially, the building comprised three stories topped with a pitched roof attic. The attic was converted to a fourth story during a subsequent renovation. The fourth story conforms to the height of the original attic and is slightly stepped back from the façade, so as not to be visible from the street and, thereby, not compromise the original proportions of the façade. Renovations and restorations were carried out in (approximately) 1935, 1954 (when the attic was converted), 1972, and 2003.

The main building fronts directly onto the street. Its entranceway is indistinguishable from the entranceways of neighboring apartment or office buildings dating from the same period. The church sanctuary is integrated into the main building and partially protrudes into the rear courtyard. The secondary structure, conforming to an earlier street plan, is accessed through the main building.

The multi-story main building is seemingly made of brick with a stucco exterior, and follows a rectangular plan (approximately 10 by 17 meters). It is in part a typical interwar structure, with the sanctuary being a single-nave basilica with a protruding semi-circular apse and with balconies along the length of the lateral walls. Less typical is the front two-thirds of the structure, which is used as office space, while the rear third of the first and second stories comprise the front third of the sanctuary, the rest of which protrudes into the courtyard. The building is, thus, almost L-shaped, with the rise of the L representing the four-story office structure (approximately 15 meters high) and the foot representing the rear two-thirds of the two-story-high sanctuary, which protrudes approximately 15 meters into the courtyard. In turn, a single-story-high apse protrudes two meters from the rear of the sanctuary.

Overall, the building can be considered a very interesting and elegant example of eclectic 1920s Sofia urban architecture. Column-like vertical panels and window pediments give a neo-classical touch. White-painted geometric decorative elements on the façade lend Secessionist and *Jugendstil* touches. Bold geometry foreshadows art-deco. The most characteristic element of the building is the semi-circular bay that protrudes from the second and third stories. This not only echoes the semi-circular apse that protrudes from the sanctuary into the courtyard, but seems to represent a 1920s interpretation of a motif from traditional Turkish residential architectural style, examples of which can still be found in many Bulgarian and Balkan cities and towns. That the bay protrudes from the upper stories and shelters the entranceway supports this interpretation.

The sanctuary itself is a light and open space characterized by art-deco-like verticals (windows) and horizontals (balconies) and strong curves (altar and apse). The building contains good examples of other typical elements of interwar Sofia architecture, including finely executed stairway banisters.

While the building appeared to be in good condition, according to the pastor, the floors were not sound, the plumbing old, and the façade marked by moisture.



Façade and entranceway, street level.



Interior of sanctuary, apse, and lateral wall.

## **Prayer House of the Church of the Adventists of the Seventh-Day, Reformed Movement**

ul. Neofit Rilski 23

The church was converted from a private residential building that seems to have been built in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was apparently bequeathed to the Reformed

Adventists by two elderly sisters who had joined the church and is now used as a prayer house and offices for the Church of the Adventists of the Seventh-Day, Reformed, who still own the building.

The building fronts the street and can be accessed directly from it. It is a two-story structure, probably made of brick, running approximately 12 meters wide by 12 to 18 meters deep and approximately 18 meters high, with a basement slightly elevated above the street level. The exterior could be described as an Italianate villa with Secessionist touches. The centered second floor balcony also echoes the overhanging second story of traditional Balkan-Turkish dwellings. The interior layout reveals the influences of the traditional Turkish private house, known in Bulgaria as “Bulgarian Renaissance Style.” Its interior is arranged symmetrically around a central staircase that leads to a salon in the center of the second floor. In this building, the former salon serves as the sanctuary. It has a vestibule.



**Façade of former private dwelling housing church and offices.**

## **Evangelical Cemetery**

The Evangelical cemetery is part of the Central Cemetery of Sofia, founded in 1885, and located behind the Catholic Cemetery and borders on the German and British World War I military cemeteries. The Protestant section is located at the rear of the Central Cemetery near the Jewish, Catholic, Muslim (Roma), Italian, and Czech cemeteries, and the graves of several other ethnic and religious minorities, as well as the British, German, Italian, and French military cemeteries.

The Evangelical Protestant cemetery certainly dates from before 1944. The boundaries of the cemetery are unclear. Thus, although it was possible to locate some stones from the 1920s, it was not clear if they marked the graves of Evangelicals or of Catholics (the adjacent cemetery is Catholic). One finds the cemetery by wending one's way behind the Catholic cemetery or by following marked paths to plot number 23.

Overall, the condition of the cemetery was good, but as with much of the Central Cemetery, it needed extensive trimming and weeding. The most notable addition to the cemetery is the grave of Bulgarian Communist leader Georgi Dimitrov. Following the destruction of his public mausoleum in the center of Sofia in 1999, Dimitrov's remains were buried with those of his family, particularly his mother, who was an Evangelical, and whose remains Dimitrov apparently had moved from her native Pleven.



**Overall view of cemetery from Georgi Dimitrov's grave.**



**Dimitrov family grave deliberately sited in the Protestant cemetery but marked with a five-pointed star.**

## **Akhmatova**

### **Evangelical Congregational Church**

Village of Akhmatova, Plovdiv Oblast

The Evangelical presence in Akhmatova dates from the 1870s. In 1900, Akhmatova was the scene of a forced public ecclesiastical debate between Orthodox and Evangelical clergy. This device—reminiscent of medieval Catholic persecution of Jews—was not uncommon in post-Ottoman Bulgaria. Today, Akhmatova is a dying village. According to sources, the few congregants attending the church are mostly from Akhmatova's Roma (Gypsy) population.

This small church, erected sometime after 1903, is a single-nave, basilica-shaped, single-story building with truncated bell tower affixed to left corner of the façade. The church is set on a knoll at the outskirts of the village. Its stone and brickwork exterior lend it an appearance of dignity and strength. The church is also said to be a copy of the original church at Komatovo. The interior is approximately 13 meters long, seven meters wide, and five meters high. Today, the church is owned by the Evangelical Congregational Church, Popovitsa.





Oblique view of side of church, “bell tower,” and façade.

## **Apriltsi**

### **Evangelical Congregational Church**

This beautiful, immense church is an important monument of the Evangelical movement in Bulgaria, and to the period when the church flourished in the surroundings of Plovdiv. The number of worshippers has declined tremendously, a trend that continues as elderly congregants pass away.

The church was built by the Bulgarian Evangelical Congregation, Abdulare (former name of Apriltsi). The congregation was founded on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1892, and soon built a two-story wooden church containing a small library. This was destroyed in a fire set by arsonists as part of a failed attempt by local Bulgarian Orthodox clergy and church members to suppress Evangelical Protestantism and drive Protestants from the village. Afterwards, the existing freestanding church was erected in 1911, and the pastor's house built in 1930. Both buildings are set within an enclosed courtyard (approximately 30 meters by 27 meters) accessible from the street. The building still serves as a church, but services are held in the pastor's house in winter to save on heating costs.

The condition of the buildings is good, but very vulnerable. Painting and superficial repair was last done more than 20 years ago. The aged congregation is merely capable of keeping the church clean. In coming years, it is not clear who will maintain the church. For now, the only urgently needed repair appears to be replacement of the metal roofing on the bell tower.

The church building is a single-nave, pitched-roof basilica with a flat interior ceiling. The bell tower is set over the entrance. The base of the tower consists of large piers forming the entrance portico. The church style is a *Jugendstil* interpretation of Romanesque, while the pastor's house resembles typical rural architecture with Art Deco influence. Interior decoration includes: hand-painted altar lettering with Bulgarian folk motifs (1960s), a band of *trompe-l'oeil* (art technique creating a three dimension illusion) classical columns at the top of interior walls, and squares of plastic imitation pressed tin sheeting on the ceiling. The building is made of stone, brick, wood beams, and roof tile. There is copper roofing on the bell tower.

The interior of the church is 13.5 meters long and 7.75 meters wide. The interior height of the sanctuary from floor to ceiling is approximately six meters. Outside, to the top of the bell tower is approximately 12 meters. The pastor's house is a T-shaped building that occupies an area of approximately 10 meters square.

During the Communist Party period, the church remained open but the pastor's house was confiscated to serve as the office of the village's mayor. The house was subsequently returned to the congregation and now serves as an office and lodging place for visiting pastors and as a chapel for worship during the winter season.

Sources say that by the interwar period of the last century, tensions between Orthodox and Protestant Christians in the village subsided. One elderly towns person remembered a time when villagers rushed from one church to another to hear Sunday services at both. As late as the 1960s, the church was full to bursting with Sunday worshippers. Today, only 15-20 people attend each Sunday.



**Oblique view from street. Top of courtyard wall visible in foreground.**



Interior, towards altar.

## Asenovgrad

### **Evangelical Church**

ul. Zahari Stoyanov 3

The Congregational (Evangelical) Church of Asenovgrad is part of a complex that includes what appears to have been the pastor's house. Asenovgrad is the modern Bulgarian name for Stanimaki (Istanimaka in the Ottoman Empire times), until the 19<sup>th</sup> century a town once populated by ethnic Greeks. The history of the church site indicates the multicultural nature of this part of the town. The synagogue of Asenovgrad was located on what is now the parking lot adjacent to the church, ground purchased by the church during the mass exodus of Jews from Bulgaria in 1948. A small mosque and a large Bulgarian Orthodox church are located a stone's throw away.

The Evangelical Church was completed in 1947, making it the last Protestant church to be completed in Bulgaria following the start of Communist Party rule. Stylistically, it combines a Bulgarian adaptation of Balkan-Turkish form, and *Jugendstil* and Secessionist elements. What appears to be the pastor's house must date to the late 19<sup>th</sup> or very early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the church building erected much later.

Access to the brick and stucco church is through a fenced-in courtyard with a locked gate. The church is a rectangular, single-nave, pitched-roof basilica with a central bell-tower over a vestibule at the entrance, approximately 24 meters by 10 meters in size. Protruding "wings" of the vestibule and a squared-off protruding apse at the rear give the building a

slight cruciform shape. The church combines modern Art Deco and International styles. The elongated arched windows on the façade reflect local preferences.

The building has been re-painted. Staining on the exterior over the fresh paint as well as crumbling plaster on the bell-tower suggests unaddressed problems with dampness.



**Façade of church with pastor's house on right.**



Side and rear view.

## **Bansko**

### **Evangelical Congregational Church, or Slovoto ('The Word')**

The sign on the Evangelical Congregational Church indicates its original name, the Evangelical Church. The congregation was begun in 1866-1867 by Evangelical missionary Charles Morse, who arrived in Bansko in response to a letter written to the Mission in Istanbul by a group of locals that included an Orthodox priest and two school teachers. They had formed a bible-study group and were not happy with the absence of comprehensible Bulgarian-language versions nor with the language of conventional liturgy, and they requested assistance and instruction. Morse is said to have begun his mission the moment he arrived in Bansko by walking into to the first nearby saloon. In the past, the Evangelical congregation in Bansko was numerous and strong. At one time in the early twentieth century, Bansko had two mayors, one Orthodox and one Evangelical.

The congregation at Bansko is probably the country's oldest, and this church structure is certainly the oldest surviving Congregational house of worship. The Bansko Church was the mother church to churches in at least 50 other locations in the area, most of which now fall within the boundaries of the Republic of Macedonia. Many of these churches have since been destroyed. Surviving examples in Macedonia include churches in Strumic, Monospitovo, and Kumanovo. All three are now Methodist.

The single-building church structure was constructed in 1868. Restoration work was performed on it in 2002. The local congregation owns the building. There is a courtyard and a shed-like outbuilding as well.

The two-story rectangular building is directly accessible from the street. The long side of the structure fronts the street and the courtyard is behind. The ground plan is symmetrical, with the entranceway at the exact center, and rooms and stairwell to the left and right of a large central vestibule. The church sanctuary occupies the second story and is entered via a stairway at the right of the building. The sanctuary is arranged perpendicular to the axis of the building (i.e., with the altar along one of the shorter lateral walls).

It is an immense (14 by 11.5 meters) *konak*-type dwelling (a large Turkish house built in the times of the Ottoman Empire), except that the second floor, usually comprised of rooms arranged symmetrically around a central vestibule at the top of a central stairwell, is, in this case, a completely open space comprising the sanctuary. The building is roughly eight to nine meters high (with the ground floor approximately 2.5 meters, the second story 2.85 meters, and the attic 2.5 to 3 meters) and is made of cut stone, rubble, brick, and wood. The roof is tiled.



**Façade.**



Sanctuary, facing altar.

## **Pastor's House for Evangelical Congregational Church**

The single-building pastor's house was built in 1900 by local congregants of the Evangelical Church, which still owns it. As with a number of other Evangelical churches, the building is made of cut stone and rubble, with intermittent brick banding and wood. The roof is tiled. The building has since been abandoned.

The house is set in the corner of a large, traditional walled-in private courtyard. Both the building and the courtyard are accessible from the street. The building is roughly square (12 by 10 meters) and approximately nine meters high. The courtyard is approximately 50 by 32 meters.

The building is in danger of complete collapse. A century of water penetration into structural walls, as well as the subsequent freezing and thawing, have caused parts of structural walls to crumble and the balance to be in danger of crumbling. The water penetration may be largely due to inadequate pointing of brickwork, which in turn, faces on wooden planks that serve as framework for rubble filling.

The congregation faces a dilemma. The municipality of Bansko has condemned the building and ordered it torn down. The building, however, has national monument status and, thus, falls under the aegis of the Bulgarian national monuments preservation authority. The Monuments Authority has assented to the razing of the structure with the proviso that it must be replaced with an identical building, with the same exact exterior

dimensions and appearance of the present structure. This is beyond the means of the congregation. At the moment, the congregation is investigating co-financing opportunities of a type common in Bulgaria, including giving a commercial venture, such as a hotel or hostel, permission to build and exploit the structure for a decade or so, providing that it commits to vacating and returning the building at the end of the agreed upon term of occupancy.



**Façade. Note crumbling at corner.**



**View of wood floor construction and beam supports. Taken from ground floor looking upward.**



## **Banya**

### **Evangelical Congregational Church**

The Evangelical Congregational Church in the village of Banya was originally simply called the Evangelical Church, and the name on the entrance to the building indicates this. The congregation was evangelized from Bansko in last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The church was built by the local congregation at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the village itself was called Bane. Its present name, Banya, is Bulgarian for bath and refers to the village's Ottoman-era bathhouse. The village is located in the plain of the Mesta River between the Rila, Pirin, and Rodope mountains, near Bansko. The local Evangelical congregation still owns the building.

Built originally as a sanctuary with some utility rooms, the church now has offices and houses a kindergarten as well. Recent renovation includes painting and plastering, and a new wooden ceiling in the sanctuary.

The single-story church building is set in a traditional walled courtyard, and access to the building from the street is through the courtyard. A slightly off-center door brings visitors into a corridor. To the left is the sanctuary, and to the right are the rooms housing offices and a kindergarten. A basement runs part of the length of the building and there is an attic under a pitched roof.

The building is 10.5 meters long by 9 meters wide, and approximately 6.5 meters from the ground to the peak of the roof. The sanctuary is nine by five meters, with a ceiling 3.3 meters high. Stylistically, it is a traditional village dwelling entered through longer axis and with a roughly symmetrical interior arrangement. Materials are also traditional—stone, rubble, and mud in an exposed wood framework—as are the partially plastered finish and clay-tiled roof. A simple bell tower tops the structure.

The building has been re-painted and re-plastered, and its stonework re-pointed with cement.



**Oblique view from front street. Note traditional stonework with exposed beams of wood frame, traditional stone wall, and courtyard entrance portal.**



**Sanctuary. Note wood ceiling.**

## **Dobrich**

### **Christian Adventist Church**

ul. Christo Smirnenski 3

This Seventh-Day Adventist church appears to date from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The building looks like it was built as a private residence and later converted into a church. The rectangular building, approximately 15 meters by 15 meters, resembles a late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century residential “townhouse” of the sort that most likely would have belonged to a relatively prosperous family. The building appears to be in good condition.

Note: Sources at the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Sofia report that the Dobrich Church dates to prior to 1944. Although this particular building and the congregation itself indeed pre-date 1944, discussions with passersby at the site suggest that the church might have been housed at a different site prior to 1944.



**Building as seen from the street. Entrance is at the far left.**



**Windows and balconies on an elegantly beveled corner of the building.**

## **Haskovo**

### **Evangelical Congregational Church**

ul. Dobrudja 37

The Evangelical Congregational Church (Evangelska Suborna Tsurkva) in the city of Haskovo likely dates from 1882. The congregation itself was founded during the 1870s as a branch of the Evangelical Congregational Church in Merichleri, and one or the other group was responsible for the building's construction.

Located in a fenced-in lot not far from the back entrance to the main post office of Haskovo, the church is accessible from the street. It is a rectangular (approximately 12 by 5 meters) single-nave basilica preceded by a walled-in portico and a bell tower. The exterior is covered with stucco. From the partially exposed brick footing on one side of the church, it would seem that the stucco masks brick walls. The exterior walls appear to be somewhat affected by dampness, a problem that will worsen with time.



**Oblique view from side street towards entranceway. Note walled-in portico and awkwardly placed and executed bell tower, quite possibly a later addition. Exposed brick footing suggests that external walls are of brick.**



**Lateral view from ul. Dobrudja. Despite signs of dampness on stucco walls, roof tiles show evidence of recent repair.**

## **Kamena Reka**

### **Evangelical Church and Evangelical Cemetery**

Kamena Reka [formerly Kayaludere (Stone River)] is a relatively isolated village located approximately 25 kilometers northwest of the town of Topolovgrad in southeastern Bulgaria, not far from the Bulgarian-Turkish border. The village is divided, Ottoman style, into two sections, one containing the village's Bulgarian Orthodox majority and their church, and the other the Evangelical population and their church. The Orthodox section is located at the top of a ridge and the Evangelical quarter is located below it.

The Evangelical Congregational Church is a single, freestanding building, surrounded by a fence with a gate. The cemetery is located on an unenclosed lot outside of the village. The church was built in 1875 and completely rebuilt in 1939. Painting, plastering, and refurbishment of the interior appear to have been done sometime in recent years.

The rectangular church is a single-nave basilica preceded by a bell tower, the base of which serves as the main entrance and enclosed vestibule. The building has no recognizable stylistic features. The sanctuary measures 12 by 6 meters and the vestibule/bell tower base, 2 by 4.5 meters. A basement runs the full length of the sanctuary. Without its bell tower and the regularly spaced windows on its lateral walls, the church would appear like a run-of-the-mill private dwelling. The church is unlike many Evangelical Methodist and Congregational churches, most of which have some sort of neo-Gothic features or other stylistic turns associated with kindred American and British churches.

The Evangelical Congregational cemetery was established after the church. Gravestones date to at least 1901. The cemetery covers an area measuring roughly 50 by 80 meters. With no fence, it is set on a slope about one kilometer south of the village. From the beginning of the Communist Party time onward, the Evangelical section has been called the "American *Mahalle*." Today, this name has an affectionate sound; this was not the case in 1948 during the coldest days of the cold war and at the time of the Pastors' Trial in which Evangelical pastors from throughout Bulgaria were accused of spying for the West. The pastor at Kamena Reka was arrested during the Trials, and like many of his fellows, was sentenced to hard labor at an infamous prison camp on Belene Island in the Danube.

The origins, early history, and trials of the Evangelical community at Kamena Reka is portrayed in "Open Letter to My Brothers and Colleagues in Christ; written on the occasion of my 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary as preacher of the gospel and pastor of the Evangelical Church at the village of Kayaludere," by Argir Hr. Kazandjiev (Plovdiv, fourth edition, 1903).

The Kayaludere congregation dates to 1873. In its early years, its members suffered persecution, opprobrium, and harassment inspired by the hierarchy and local monks of the Bulgarian Orthodox who tried to crush the spread of Evangelical Christianity.

Evangelical Christians clustered in their own section of the village near their newly built church and founded their own cemetery after being banned from burying their dead at the Bulgarian Orthodox Cemetery. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, hostilities subsided, although to this day, Evangelical Christians still live in a separate section. During the Communist Party period, their section was referred to by the village's Bulgarian Orthodox Christians as "the American quarter"—this not without rancor. Despite persecution attendant to the Pastors' Trial of 1948 and the arrest and imprisonment of the local pastor, the Evangelic Church at Kamena Reka remained open throughout the Communist Party period; services were held every single Sunday throughout the period without interruption. Kamena Reka is set in an isolated location near the Bulgarian-Turkish border and, thus, sits far from the center of power at Sofia.

Since the end of the Communist Party period, the agricultural sector in Bulgaria has suffered, and village populations have been depleted by resulting out-migration. The population of Kamena Reka has fallen from almost 1,200 individuals in 1989 to only about 140 people today. At present, the Evangelical congregation comprises roughly 20 families. Church attendance averages 20 individuals each Sunday and more than 50 on holidays. The congregation is aging and more and more houses in the Evangelical section fall empty each year.

The church is basically sound, but there are some signs of dampness on the interior. The major problem appears to be that the bell tower is leaning forward and slowly separating from the sanctuary. This may be due to differential patterns of subsidence, as the main part of the church is on a slope and the bell tower on relatively level ground. This process has been ongoing for decades, according to locals, and thus, does not immediately threaten the structure. The cemetery is somewhat overgrown, typical of a rural place of burial.

Kamena Reka is a fascinating, isolated village in which Evangelical Protestantism took hold long ago and survives until today. The topography of the village is quite interesting, with the Bulgarian Orthodox section and church on a dominating ridge, and the Evangelical section and church on lower ground, preserving a pattern of settlement dating back to the last decades of Ottoman times.



**Old gravestones in the cemetery reflect traditional Bulgarian forms.**







**Oblique view of church from front. The bell tower is partially concealed behind the tree at the right.**



**Interior of church, facing altar.**

## **Khotantsa**

### **Methodist Church**

The Methodist Church in the village of Khotantsa in the district of Russe was built in 1927 under the auspices of Pastor Zachary Dimitrov (cf. Methodist Church, Russe). Construction was carried out by the Evangelical Building Cooperative (Evangelisko Stroitelno Druzhestvo), a Sofia-based organization. The church is also known as the Evangelical Church or the Evangelical Methodist Episcopal Church, evidence of its ownership by the Methodist Evangelical Episcopal Church of Bulgaria. A pastor's house was built shortly after the church, sometime in the 1920s or 1930s, and is now connected to it. Restoration was conducted during the 1990s, including the repair of cracks in the façade caused by the earthquake of 1977. Some cracks are still partially visible.

Khotantsa is unique among Protestant settlements in Bulgaria in having been a largely Evangelical village from the time of Bulgaria's independence from the Ottoman Empire in the 1870s until recent times. Within Evangelical Bulgaria, the Khotantsa community has had an influence far larger than its size. Present-day Methodist pastors in Russe, Shumen, and Sofia trace their family histories to Khotantsa. Over the last decades, international church conferences have been held in Khotantsa and foreign visitors are frequent.

The Methodist presence in Khotantsa dates to 1878. Throughout the Ottoman period, Khotantsa (Otancha in Turkish) was a mostly ethnic-Turkish village. In the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish war and the end of Ottoman control, many of the Turks and Muslims of eastern Bulgaria fled, died, were expelled during the ensuing chaos, or were massacred by Bulgarian or Russian forces. The Turks of Khotantsa fled in haste, selling their property at a loss.

Some years before, Zachary Dimitrov (cf. Methodist Church, Russe) had arrived in Russe from Macedonia, which was still under Ottoman control and would remain so until 1912. Dimitrov became pastor of Russe, and together with friends and co-religionists, bought up land in Khotantsa. He then invited Methodists from Macedonia to join him in the village. In time, Methodists and other Evangelical Christians from Macedonia and southern Bulgaria arrived as well.

The Methodist congregation at Khotantsa was formally organized in 1884, and its first church was established in a former Turkish house. The present pastor's house was built on the site of that first church; the present church stands adjacent to it.

The Methodist community set the tone of post-independence Khotantsa. Orthodox Christian inhabitants tended to look up to the Methodists, who appeared to be literate, sober, industrious, and more western-oriented. Among the Orthodox villagers, intermarriage into the Methodist community was considered a social step up. Methodists

were also considered to have stronger religious traditions and understanding of the Bible through their use of vernacular texts.

There was apparently no Orthodox house of worship in Khotantsa until the village's present Bulgarian Orthodox Church was consecrated in the 1930s. The measure of coexistence between Methodists and Orthodox was demonstrated during the 1990s, when the Orthodox priest lent his church to the Methodists to provide extra meeting space for an international meeting of Evangelical Christians hosted in Khotantsa. Afterward, the Methodists donated funds for the repair and repainting of the Orthodox Church. By the middle of the Communist Party period, the community had shrunk to about 100 people. Today, the church has 17 members, almost all elderly, who descended from the village's original Evangelical community.

Both the church and the pastor's house are set in a fenced courtyard directly accessible from the street. The church is a rectangular (15 by 9 meters) neo-Gothic basilica with a central bell tower and its entrance on the shorter side. The pastor's house is also rectangular (12 by 5 meters) and comparatively nondescript. The perpendicular intersection of the two structures begins when the pastor's house abuts the church from the rear (altar) wall and continues up to roughly 10 meters from the façade. A doorway affords indoor access between the two structures. The church is made of stone quarried in the region, while the pastor's house is brick and stucco.

The condition of the building is good, despite visible signs of damage from the 1977 earthquake. Cracks in the façade caused by the earthquake were determined superficial.



**Diagonal view from courtyard. Note pastor's house abutting on church (partially visible in shadow at right).**



Interior, facing altar.

## **Khotantsa (District of Russe)**

### **Methodist Cemetery**

The Methodist Cemetery in the village of Khotantsa was begun in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Evangelical Christian community in Khotantsa.

The cemetery mirrors the significance of the Methodist Church and settlement at Khotantsa, but also provides its own key to the history and spirit of Evangelical Protestantism in Bulgaria. The cemetery contains the remains of, amongst others, Pastors Zachary Dimitrov and Spas Raichev. The life of Pastor Dimitrov (1854-1950) spans the history of Evangelical Protestantism in Macedonia and Bulgaria, from the arrival of the first American Missionaries to the founding of the Methodist Church at Russe, to the establishment of Methodist community at Khotantsa, to the Pastors' Trial of 1948. Pastor Raichev (1849-1926) was a Baptist from the village of Zavet near Kostenets in the Sofia region. A rough and tumble evangelist, he was known for preaching in taverns. He was one of the early settlers who moved from the south of Bulgaria to Khotantsa, drawn by inexpensive land and the prospect of living in a Protestant community.

Access to the site is by an unpaved road and path approximately two kilometers from the Methodist Church near the center of the village. It is a compact (approximately 50 by 50 meters) rural cemetery set in a tree-shaded knoll amidst fields, with roughly 70 of its graves still marked and visible.

The styles of the gravestones vary but include traditional Bulgarian inscribed cut-stone crosses, 19<sup>th</sup> century European-style headstones with photos of the deceased printed on porcelain cartouches, and geometric headstones typical of the Communist Party period.

The cemetery lacks a new fence to keep out grazing cattle, goats, and sheep. Over the last years, wooden fencing has repeatedly disappeared, possibly taken by destitute Roma to use as fuel. A fence utilizing concrete or metal posts would be desirable. Individual stones would also benefit from being reset, examined, treated for exfoliation, and conserved.



**Overview looking downhill.**



**View from middle of cemetery. Note traditional Bulgarian cruciform grave-stones at left and center-right. At center-left: grave of Pastor Raichev and niece.**

## **Lovech**

### **Methodist Evangelical Church**

Lovech is a historic city on the Osum River, located where the river flows through a gorge in the Balkan Mountains. Lovech is rich in traditional Balkan architecture and 19<sup>th</sup> century monuments, including an unusual covered bridge with integrated shopping street. Since the fall of the Communist dictatorship, Lovech has been the victim of economic malaise and the departure of much of its population (in search of work) to other cities and abroad.

According to locals, the presence of the Evangelical Church in Lovech dates to 1872, prior to the end of Ottoman rule. In the early years, religious services were held in a private home. A church was erected in 1890 on the grounds of the Evangelical Women's College. It was razed in 1936 as the result of pressure from the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, which objected to the presence of a non-Orthodox church on the grounds of the school. Early in the Communist period, during the Pastors' Trial of 1948, the church's pastor, Pastor Iliev, was arrested. The sanctuary of the church subsequently was rented for a nominal sum by the municipal authorities from the local Methodist congregation. The sanctuary was used as a Komsomol meeting place until the early 1960s, and later, as a rehearsal hall for musicians. The sanctuary reverted to the Methodist Church after the collapse of the Communist regime. According to the present pastor, who has served since 1986, religious services have been held somewhere in the building every single Sunday since the completion of the building in 1940. During the decades that the

sanctuary served other uses, religious services were held in the basement or one of the other rooms in the pastor's quarters.

The church complex, built in 1940, houses church, offices, and pastor's apartment within a single ensemble. The church was painted and superficially restored during the mid-1990s.

The entrance to the church fronts on the street, and the entrance to the pastor's house is along the alleyway alongside the building. The church is a simple rectangular building, built in a modern eclectic style incorporating elements of Art Deco and International style design with traditional Balkan motifs. The main entrance is on the short side. The two-story pastorate is built onto the church's rear.

The sanctuary is roughly 8 by 13 meters. Only the left hand side of the church sanctuary has windows. The bell tower is approximately three meters wide and four deep and protrudes from the right front of the building. The offices and apartment comprising the pastor's house add about 14 meters to the length of the building. A basement runs under the sanctuary for its full length and under the pastorate. The basement walls and skirting are built of stone cement; the rest of the walls are brick.

The building appears strong despite signs of moisture on the walls. The roof has apparently been repaired and is sound and waterproof. There is apparently water in the basement and foundation walls, and resulting rising damp may be the reason that stucco on the façade appears damp and crumbling. According to the pastor, pieces sometimes break off and strike passersby. Wood stoves heat the church, which is an inefficient and expensive method that does little to dry out dampness. The church was built with low-grade materials, including low-grade bricks. The building is also sited on a slope; dampness may be aggravated by the downhill flow of rain and groundwater.



Oblique view of façade and bell tower.



Sanctuary facing the altar and pulpit.

## American Young Women's College

The American Young Women's College was founded by the Methodist Evangelical Church. Opened in Lovech in 1881, it served as a boarding school for girls and young women. The building complex, most of which appears to date later than 1881 and was probably built gradually, now serves as the public Regional Language School. The



college consisted of a school building, dormitory, former house of the rector, former Methodist hospital (today a dormitory), and church (no longer extant). The rector's house was built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the hospital was erected in 1900. Based on its style, the dormitory was probably built in the 1930s.

Entrance to the complex is through a gate and onto the grounds of the school. The buildings are mostly constructed of stone and brick. They are in generally good condition and most appear to have been painted and plastered in recent years. A plaque is mounted at the entrance to the main building and notes that this had been the site of the American Girls' College from 1881-1948. Some stones remain from the wall of the first Evangelical Church of Lovech, razed in 1936 due to opposition and pressure from the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

### **Historical Significance**

Educational opportunities for women were practically non-existent in Ottoman and early post-Ottoman Bulgaria. To address this lack, the Methodist Evangelical Church set out to open a college for young women. The college initially was opened in the city of Troyan, but was rebuffed by the Bulgarian Orthodox monks of Troyan Monastery. The college reopened at Lovech in 1881 on land donated by Stefan Gechev, a local resident who "received the word" and became an Evangelical Christian. The college remained in operation under Methodist auspices until 1948, when it was nationalized and reopened as a state educational institution, a function it still serves. A history of the college was written and published (in Bulgarian) by Ivan Lalev, director of the historical museum of Lovech.



**Main building of the college, dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.**



**Dormitory building, probably from the early to mid 1930s.**

## **Merichleri (District of Haskovo)**

### **Evangelical Congregational Church**

Located in the town of Merichleri, the Evangelical Congregational Church (Evangelska Suborna Tserkva) is set in a large plot also containing a separate structure, which had originally served as the pastor's residence. One room of the pastor's house has been refurnished to serve as a small chapel for use during the winter season, when the church building itself is too cold to use and too expensive to heat. The rest of the house contains a kitchen and quarters for visiting pastors.

The Evangelical Congregation Merichleri built the present church building in 1932 and the pastor's house in 1935; it maintains ownership of both. The only restoration reported was carried out on the exterior stonework of the apse, which had recently (with support from donors in Germany) been laminated to counteract seepage of moisture. In the opinion of the surveyor, the lamination may have in fact exacerbated the problem by preventing the proper "breathing" of the stone.

Set on a large lot in the village, the site of the church is accessible from the street. The church is a rectangular (approximately 16 by 8 meters) single-nave structure built from locally quarried stone, with a tiled roof and an interior ceiling made of wood. It contains dedicatory doors from the original Evangelical Congregational Church building at Merichleri. Two distinctive features of the building are its entrance through a lateral wall (an unusual design for a basilica-shaped church) and the position of its apse at the altar end of the structure. Its exterior has little in common with the neo-Gothic and

Romanesque features of many of Bulgaria's Evangelical churches. Indeed, in shape and materials it in some ways resembles an Orthodox Christian chapel, and there are similarities to the rectangular stone mosques documented in the Deli Orman region as well.

The Merichleri congregation is one of the oldest in Bulgaria, dating to 1872 (four years prior to the end of Ottoman rule). It is the 'mother church' of the Evangelical congregation at Haskovo and was founded with the support of Evangelical missionaries and congregations at the nearby city of Stara Zagora and at more distant Bansko. For a time, following the Pastors' Trial of 1948, the church was used as a storage shed for cotton bales (cotton being one of the mainstays of local agriculture since Ottoman times). This is the third church building constructed at the site. At least one of the two previous churches was destroyed by arson in an attempt by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to drive people who had converted to Evangelical Protestantism from town.

The overall condition appears excellent. However, the wooden interior ceiling shows signs of rot, which is indicative of roof leakage. New roof tiles and repairs to the interior ceiling and to gutters and drainpipes, which altogether constitute a relatively small expenditure, would assure the structure's continued integrity.



**Rear (altar end) of church and lateral wall from street side of courtyard. Note apse (with signs of extensive repair) and (at left) main entrance to the church through lateral wall. Pastor's house is visible at the extreme left.**



**Interior towards altar and apse. Note signs of rot in wood ceiling, especially at juncture with altar-end wall.**

## **Evangelical Pentecostal Church**

The Evangelical Pentecostal Church (Evangeliska Petdesyatna Tsurkva) in the town of Merichleri was built, according to local sources, in 1939 or 1940. The pastor's house that attaches to the rear of the church was built sometime after, though it is unclear exactly when. The ownership of the buildings and of the site is also unclear.

Set on a small lot on the upper edge of the town, the church site is accessible from the street. The church itself is a rectangular (approximately 13 by 6 meters) single-nave basilica, with an unusually positioned entrance on the lateral wall, which is also the only wall with windows. The roof is tiled and the exterior of the building is covered with stucco, presumably masking brick walls. The economy with which the building was seemingly constructed suggests that stone was not used. Arched window openings and a slight neo-Gothic pointing of the tracery window above the main entrance are the building's only ornamentation. The interior could not be surveyed.

The building may require repairs, as the exterior walls appear to be plagued by dampness—most likely new roof tiles, repair of gutters and drainpipes, and some repair to the interior ceiling.



**Church, oblique view from road. Note glassed-in main entrance at center of lateral wall, and at far right, pastor's house attached to rear of church building.**



**Oblique view of other side of church. Note that this lateral wall, unlike that containing the main entrance, has no windows.**

## **Panagyurishte**

### **Evangelical Church and Pastor's House**

The church is known both as the Pentecostal Church and the Evangelical Congregational Church, depending on whose side one takes in a current conflict over possession and title. The church was probably built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, after Bulgarian independence, but

the exact date has not been determined. It was built as an Evangelical (Congregational) church, but for the last 10-15 years or longer, the church has been occupied and used by a Pentecostal group whose present pastor and most, if not all, of the congregants are Roma. The Evangelical Congregational congregation now meets in an apartment. The Congregationalists are attempting to regain possession and title to the church. The church complex also includes a pastor's house, probably erected in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Panagyurishte was a center of Bulgarian rebellion against the Ottomans just prior to the Russo-Turkish war. Interest in Evangelical Christianity was an aspect of the social and religious foment in the town at the time.

The rectangular church building is a wood frame structure with brick fill and a tile roof. It is entered on one of its short sides through a courtyard from the street. It is a single-nave or hall-type basilica with entry via a vestibule at the base of the bell tower. The vestibule was once open. The building has a very functional appearance, little different from a simple utilitarian house or shed, but the bell tower lends an ecclesiastical air and touch of elegance.

The sanctuary interior is approximately 12.5 by 7 meters. The vestibule measures approximately 1.75 by 1.75 meters. The pastor's house is approximately 10 by 10 meters including its protruding entranceway.

The condition of the building is poor. The upper reaches of the bell tower show severe damage. The church sits aside a basement showing signs of moisture. Curvature of interior walls and floor indicate possible subsidence.



**Oblique view. The grey door is a late addition; vestibule under bell tower was formerly open on the sides. Note damage to bell tower.**



Interior, towards altar.



Pastor's house.

## **Pazardjik**

### **Evangelical Congregational Church**

The Evangelical Congregational Church in the city of Pazardjik was built in 1910 and completely restored in the 1990s. It is still used as a church by the Evangelical

congregation. A separate pastor's house once stood next to the church, but was seized and razed early in the Communist period. A Communist-era residential block stands on land seized from the church, which used to be the front yard of the church.

The rectangular church measure approximately 11 by 8 meters in size and is entered through a fenced courtyard. It is mostly built of brick finished with stucco and has a tile roof. The church is distinctive for its neoclassical style façade. The church is in good condition due to a recent extensive restoration, but in the restoration, the interior columns, originally wood, were covered with concrete and other changes were made to the building's original appearance. The date of construction is inscribed in the cartouche set within the pediment.



**Church and courtyard.**



**Interior, towards pulpit.**



## **Pazardjik (Tserevo)**

### **Evangelical Congregational Church**

Village of Tserevo, Region of Pazardjik

Tserovo is set in the foot of the Balkan Mountains exactly midway between Sofia and Plovdiv. The village and surroundings are exceptionally rich agricultural locations.

The Evangelical community in present-day Tserovo was founded in 1871, making it one of the oldest in Bulgaria. The community's first church was built some years later (1880). According to local sources, the first church was damaged by arson three times in attempts to intimidate the Evangelical community; these tensions later subsided. The new church was built in 1928. It remained open during the communist period. Apparently, relatively little pressure was exerted against the community during the communist time. At one time, the Evangelist community in Tserovo numbered more than 300 people. Today, 50 to 60 people attend church services regularly.

Until recent times, the church served a role for the larger population of the village. In the years prior to television, entertainment evenings and amateur theater productions were held in the "salon" and were enthusiastically attended by people of all creeds.

The church and pastor's house are set in a courtyard that is accessible from the street. The pastor's house, which is said to be 150 years old, is an example of a provincial Turkish-style Balkan house, originally a private residence set in a traditional Balkan-style walled village courtyard. When the church was built, the courtyard was cleared and converted to church grounds.

The church itself is a rectangular single-nave basilica with a protruding five-faceted apse. The sanctuary is preceded by a wider two-story vestibule area, which contains a small central foyer with guestroom/office downstairs and a (former) balcony upstairs. In turn, a narrow open portico precedes the vestibule. Together, these elements comprise an inverted cross with the vestibule structure serving as the arms of the cross. This plan is unusual in Bulgaria. The vestibule and sanctuary are raised a half-level over a basement area that runs the full length and width of the church. This ample space, which once comprised the "salon" (meeting and entertainment area), has not been renovated.

The building was constructed mainly of stone, brick, and wood, with a tiled roof. The base of the church up to the floor level of the sanctuary is stone; brick is used from there up. The triangular pediments comprised by the upper floor of the vestibule area and the roof of the portico lends a classical note to the building. The interior of the sanctuary is 12 by 7 meters; the vestibule including the side rooms is 3 by 9.2 meters. The portico is 2 by 5.2 meters. The building is about seven meters high to the peak of the roof and 10 meters to the top of the bell tower.

The church was fully renovated inside and out in a major project begun in 2000. Everything but the first story/basement "salon" and the wooden floors in the sanctuary

had been completed when the building was visited for the survey. Concrete footing was poured to stabilize the building and a barrel vaulted wooden ceiling was built in the sanctuary. The upper gallery was closed and the original decorations are no longer visible.

The pastor's house was also fully renovated and stabilized. The Tserovo Evangelical Community financed the restoration and implemented the project themselves.



**Close-up of façade.**



**Interior, facing altar.**



**Pastor's house opposite the church.**

## **Pleven**

### **Methodist Evangelical Church**

The Methodist Evangelical Church and adjacent pastor's house are located in downtown Pleven, at the edge of the traditional urban core, close to the city's main Orthodox

Church and the city's one remaining Ottoman monument, an imposing late-period *Hamam* (bath house).

The Evangelical congregation at Pleven was founded in 1874. The congregation purchased the ground for the present church in 1896 or 1897, and construction of the present church was completed in 1912. It is presently not known if the church was built by local Evangelicals or by the central construction once maintained by the Methodist Church at Sofia. Early in the Communist Party period, the municipality appropriated the church building. During the 1950s, the building housed Pleven's Municipal People's Council and in 1963, was converted to house Pleven's municipal puppet theater. At the time it was visited, the structure was being restored to return to use as church.

The building is eclectic, with neoclassical and neo-Gothic elements. It features a pitched-roofed vestibule, a bell tower, and an unusual layout: the sanctuary is comprised of a laterally placed, pitched-roof, nearly square basilica with a rectangular recessed apse containing space for the altar and pulpit. This orientation gives the building the appearance of having two façades and creates a nearly square interior space.

The foundation and basement walls are stone. There are brick walls from the main floor level upward and wood roof framework on the interior. The main space of the sanctuary is 10.9 meters wide and 11.35 deep. The pulpit/altar is set in a rectangular apse that protrudes from the rear of the sanctuary. The apse is 6.2 meters deep and 8.9 wide. A vestibule measuring 4.2 meters wide and 4.6 meters deep precedes the main space of the sanctuary. The bell tower, located to the left of the vestibule, measures approximately three by three meters at its base. A 3.5-meter high basement runs the full length and width of the main space of the sanctuary. The top of the bell tower, the building's highest point, stands 14 meters above floor level.

In 2005, a partial restoration was underway, financed by a \$60,000 donation from the Dunwoody United Methodist Church in Georgia, USA, aimed at removing the modifications made when the church building was used as a puppet theater. Because of a controversy surrounding the title to the church building, permission to proceed with restoration was stalled for more than five years at the National Monuments Commission in Sofia, where the building is listed as a "Monument of Culture." The building's walls and foundations are structurally sound but the building requires much work and substantial support to complete the return to its original function.

The ownership issue is complex. Following the collapse of Communist Party rule in 1989, the building was once again used as a church, but for a number of years was appropriated de-facto by Pentecostals. During the 1990s to the present, a series of suits and countersuits, court cases and appeals have been conducted, with both the Methodist Church and the municipality of Pleven claiming ownership of the church building. At the moment, the Methodist Church has possession of the building. The Church has obtained appropriate building permits and is proceeding with restoration on the grounds that the deed of ownership for the church building resides with the Methodist General Board of Global Ministries in New York, and that the Board has issued a valid power of attorney

over the building to Bedros Altunian, Methodist pastor at Varna and “Glaven Intendant” (chief superintendent) of the Methodist Church in Bulgaria. The final outcome, however, was still to be determined when the church was visited.

### **Historical Significance**

Historical footnote: The marriage registry of the Methodist Church of Pleven for the year 1906 contains a fascinating entry. Georgi Dimitrov – famed defendant at the 1933 Reichstag fire trial at Leipzig, pre-war Moscow-based head of Comintern (Communist International Organization), and post-war leader of Communist Party Bulgaria – was married by the Methodist pastor at Pleven on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1906. The registry entry declares the religion of the 26-year-old Dimitrov to be “Evangelical” and that of his wife to be “free-thinker.” Dimitrov’s mother was an observant Evangelical and active member of the Congregational Evangelical Church at Bansko.



**Oblique view.**



**Interior, from apse through main chamber to vestibule and entrance.**

## **Methodist Evangelical Pastor's House**

The pastor's house is located adjacent to the Methodist Church in downtown Pleven. The building, built to be the pastor's residence in 1916, has housed the worship space and church offices since the post Second World War expropriation of the actual church building. It was to be continued to be used for worship until restoration of the church building was completed. The large room that has served as the worship space since the early years of the Communist Party period appears to be an add-on to the original structure.

The building has been altered over time. The ceilings of the rooms on the upper story have been knocked out and replaced with plasterboard. The upper story rooms and vestibule have also been painted.

The house is a Europeanized version of a traditional Balkan-Turkish home. It is wider than it is deep, and consists of a large central vestibule around the stairway on each story with rooms to the left and right. A protruding second story balcony directly above the main entrance also characterizes the building. Some decorations were added to the façade in the *Jugendstil* style popular at the time of construction. The original building measures 12 meters in width and 5 in depth. The add-on at the rear is nine meters wide and four meters deep.

In addition to its original role as the pastor's house, the building is now historically significant as the Communist Party-era church. It appears to be in relatively good

condition, but with obvious moisture damage to the walls and ceilings. It probably needs a new roof, pointing, and plastering.



**Oblique view showing position next to church.**



**Room that has served as church for almost 60 years.**

## **Plovdiv**

### **Evangelical Congregational Church**

ul. Lady Gladstone (Sakhat Tepe Quarter)

The original stone and metal sign on the entranceway reads (in Cyrillic): Evangelical Church. Examination of the sign from a distance reveals that there may have been a first line of text, the letters of which are now missing.

The church building, entered from the street, comprises a complex together with a nondescript post-war two-story building now used as the pastor's house. The original pastor's house that had stood on the same site had apparently been bought in 1950 by a 'partisan,' who had the building torn down and replaced with the present structure. The property and new building reverted to the church following the changes of 1989.

The church is a striking Northern European structure amidst the mixed architecture of Plovdiv. Its size, and especially its workmanship and detailing are impressive. Indeed, the precision of its stonework is of a level almost unknown in Bulgaria. The conception, execution, and present condition are evidence of the devotion and energies of its founders and of generations of its congregants. Its setting on the tree-shaded slopes of Sakhat Tepe calls to mind Britain, New England, or even the old campus of Robert College of Istanbul on the heights above the Bosphorus.

It was initially built between 1900 and 1903 as the successor to a nearby church that the congregation had outgrown. Construction is said to have been under the supervision of prominent American missionary Dr. George Marsh, a seminal figure in the establishment and propagation of Evangelical Protestantism in Bulgaria. Sources report that Dr. Marsh supervised construction and searched Bulgaria for stonemasons with skills necessary to cut and dress local stone for the construction of the church. He finally found such masters amongst the Slavchev family in the village of Slaveno in the Rodope Mountains. The ceramic roof tiles are also said to be stamped with the name of Dr. Marsh.

Modifications to the ground floor entranceway were made at a later date. (Note: Due to the slope of the terrain, the ground floor does not run the full length of the building. The full-length sanctuary, thus, comprises the second story.) The ground floor originally housed a large vestibule and offices. The vestibule was subsequently transformed into a small chapel that was used as the church during the Communist Party period and is now used by the Armenian Evangelic Congregational congregation. The building was also restored in phases during the late 1990s, during which new roof gutters were installed to solve an ongoing drainage problem.

The church can be described as neo-Gothic with a curious use of infrequent but regular, intermittent courses of brickwork in the cut-stone walls. These brickwork courses could be a stylized homage to Byzantine or Ottoman traditions, or may simply serve the utilitarian function of leveling. Stone and brickwork both reflect exceptional



workmanship and precision. This style of stone and brickwork was apparently characteristic of churches built by Dr. Marsh.

The building's layout is a cross-plan: from the exterior, the church is pronouncedly cruciform. Within, it appears as a modified "T" with the depression of the rectangular apse giving a slight suggestion of a cruciform plan. One interesting design feature is that the floor of the lower range of the nave, i.e., that most distant from the apse, rises at a slight angle to afford worshippers in the back of the church a better view of the altar. The building also features a bell tower. The main sanctuary measures 17 meters (including shallow apse) by 9 meters, with an approximate height of 12 meters.

The windows bear the names of Drs. Long, Riggs, and Hamlin, other seminal figures in Evangelical Protestantism (Congregational and Methodist) in Bulgaria. Numerous stained glass panels had been broken by stones tossed by students of the school set behind and slightly above the church on the steep slope of Sakhat Tepe. These panels have been replaced with clear glass.

A recent pastor of the church also deserves mention. According to sources, Lambri Mishkov, pastor at Plovdiv-Komatovo from 1969-85 and Plovdiv 1985-87, was a pre-war graduate of Princeton University with degrees in Chemical Engineering and Philosophy/Theology. Following the "Pastors' Trial," he was imprisoned for 15 years (1948-63) in a notorious prison on Bellene Island in the Danube.

Three stone slabs stand in a small niche in the narrow exterior walkway around the church. These were removed from a Protestant cemetery prior to its being cleared some decades ago during the construction of Plovdiv's football stadium. One of the stones is a very simple memorial to Dr. Marsh. The other two stones are those of Reverend and Mrs. Miriam. Reverend Miriam was shot and killed by bandits during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century while traveling with his family from Edirne to Plovdiv. His wife died in Plovdiv some weeks later.



**Façade and lateral wall indicating cruciform shape.**



**Interior, toward altar from rear of church. Note the neo-Gothic piers and spring of arches.**

## Evangelical Baptist Church

ul. May 1

The utilitarian, near-makeshift Baptist church is a small row house in an urban street grid, attached at the rear to an adjacent town house. The building's construction date is unknown, but it was probably erected in the very late-19<sup>th</sup> or early-20<sup>th</sup> century. Originally used as a workshop, the building was converted into the Church of Evangelical Baptists during the 1920s.

The simple, two-story, square-shaped brick structure has a stucco façade decorated with simple Art Deco banding. The L-shaped second story is subdivided between the sanctuary and an office space. The partially subterranean first story is also broken into separate rooms, one of which is a kindergarden. The interior measures eight-by-eight meters square. The first story is two meters high and the second story is three meters high.



Oblique view. Note that rear wall of building is attached to town house at far left.



**Sanctuary, facing altar.**

## **Adventist Church**

The Plovdiv Adventist Church is located on a quiet side street not far from the Congregational Church at ul. Kapitan Burago 4. The church sanctuary is set in a nondescript brick apartment building that houses a complex with offices, etc. The exact date of construction is unknown, but the building is said to date back to the interwar period. The sanctuary began to take shape sometime during the 1930s by knocking out the walls, floors, and ceilings of several apartments, and has been completed in subsequent stages. The 18 by 12 meter sanctuary is in good condition and in use by the Seventh-Day Adventists.



**The sanctuary looking toward the altar.**



**Apartment building complex housing the sanctuary.**

## **Plovdiv-Komatovo**

### **Evangelical Congregational Church**

The village of Komatovo now falls within the boundaries of the municipality of Plovdiv.

Komatovo boasts Orthodox, Catholic, and Congregational churches and worshippers. Sources say that the present Congregational church, built in 1930, replaced a previous church of identical dimensions that was built by Dr. George Marsh, which was abandoned and razed when the congregation was pressured to leave the village by the Orthodox community. Twenty years later, members of the congregation returned. The experience of hostility towards and expulsion of Protestants is common in the Plovdiv region and elsewhere in Bulgaria.

The existing single-nave, basilica-shaped church, built in 1930, is set in a tree-dotted plot in the center of the former village of Komatovo, along with a pastor's house. A bell tower was added in the mid 1930s and the pastor's house was erected in 1947-50. Restored sometime after 1989, the church is decorated with window pediments and neo-Baroque pediment elements on the façade. It is built of stone and brick with a stucco finish. The interior measures 13.25 by 7 meters and approximately five meters high; the simple, rectangular space has a flat ceiling. The bell tower, approximately 12.5 meters tall, rises over a now walled-in, formerly open, baldachin-like portico that precedes the church and measures 2.5 by 2.5 by approximately 2.5 meters.

The street plan of Komatovo has changed since the construction of the church and there is no longer a street running along the front of the church's property, which now borders on the property of an adjoining house. The building is accessible from the street running behind it.

The church is still in use, attended by a community of approximately 110 congregants at the time it was visited, mostly elderly. It appears to be in good condition except for moderate dampness of interior walls from water accumulating at and leaking from the juncture where the pitched roof meets the neo-Baroque faux pediment at the façade. An adequate gutter would possibly suffice to fix this problem.



**Oblique view of the church from the rear right.**



**Interior of church, facing altar.**

## **Popovitsa**

### **Evangelical Congregational Church**

Located in the Village of Popovitsa, the church shares a large plot with the pastor's house off a main road in the center of town. The complex was initially built in 1930 by a local Evangelical congregation, with reputed help from the family of Dr. George Marsh. It was restored sometime after 1989 and it is still in use by and under ownership of the Evangelical Congregational Church of Popovitsa. The single-nave, two-story building is an Art Deco interpretation of a traditional church structure with traditional local brickwork and a tile roof with characteristically Bulgarian Congregational (see Evangelical Congregational Church, Plovdiv) exposed stonework elements. There is an Italianate bell tower affixed to the left side of the structure.

The ground level entranceway contains a vestibule linking to laterally-placed stairs to the second floor and to a short flight of stairs to the first floor set slightly below ground level. The church sanctuary, 16 by 7 meters, is on the second story and runs the full length and width of the building. The building appears to be in excellent condition, but the renovation has left little of the original exterior or interior to conserve or restore.

### **Historical Significance**

The Congregational community in Popovitsa dates from 1900 when a group of Evangelical Christians were forced out of the village of Akhmatova by Bulgarian Orthodox clergy and villagers settled in Popovitsa. The original Evangelical church in Popovitsa, built by the community the very same year of their arrival from Akhmatova, was destroyed in the earthquake of 1928. The present church was built in 1930 with, some individuals say, support from the family of Dr. Marsh.

The Evangelical community in Popovitsa, like many other rural Protestant communities in Bulgaria, is small, dwindling, and comprised mostly of elderly worshippers.

Although the church was in very good condition when visited, this unique monument deserves monitoring. The dwindling of its congregation could make the church vulnerable in future years. The Evangelical Church at Popovitsa is unique amongst 20<sup>th</sup> century rural churches in terms of size, solidity, and combination of modern and traditional design.



Frontal view. Note cut-stone portal.



Second story sanctuary, facing altar.



## Russe

### **Church of the Adventists of the Seventh-Day**

The Adventist congregation in Russe is amongst Bulgaria's oldest. The Adventist Church and Temperance League were first introduced into Bulgaria from Russia. Russe's location on the Danube across from Romania made it the natural entranceway for people, goods, and ideas from Central Europe and from the north and east. From the time of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ottoman Governor, Midhat Pasha, Russe has been a modern, diverse, and tolerant city.

Built in 1927 by the Union of Seventh-Day Adventist Churches, Bulgaria (originally known as the Bulgarian Temperance Society), the Church of the Adventists of the Seventh-Day in Russe underwent a complete renovation during the 1990s which obliterated all features, internal and external, of the original structure. The Union of Seventh-Day Adventist Churches, Bulgaria still owns the building.

Access to the simple single-nave basilica is via a fenced courtyard fronting the street. The building is about 15 by 9 meters, with an interior height of 15 meters.



**Oblique view of façade and right wall of church from sidewalk.**

## Evangelical Baptist Church

The Evangelical Baptist Church in the city of Russe was built in 1897 and reflects on a modest scale the architectural eclecticism of Russe, a Danubian city whose location is linked to the Ottoman and Hapsburg Empires, and also to Romania, Russia, and the world of the Black Sea. Russe was modernized in appearance and attitude in the 19<sup>th</sup> century under Ottoman Governor and later reformer, Midhat Pasha. Today, Russe's importance as a river port has diminished, though its buildings remain memorials to a rich past. Although it is unclear whether the local or national congregation built it, the church is now owned by the Baptist Union of Bulgaria. A sign at the site states that Ivan Kargel founded the congregation in 1880.

Evangelical Baptist Christianity in Bulgaria had its roots in Russia. In 1867, 37 German-speaking Baptist families from Russia moved to Tulcea, a city of mixed ethnicity near the Danube delta in the east of present-day Romania. The group spread the Baptist faith first to the Romanian capital city of Bucharest and from there southward into Bulgaria. The faith was spread in part by Kargel, pastor of the Tulcea families, and in part by wandering *Colporteurs* (bible and religious tract distributors who were granted the right to distribute religious materials to Christian subjects in the Ottoman Europe). In 1873, three people were converted to the Baptist faith in the Danubian city of Lom. Soon after, Pastor Kargil received an invitation to Kazanlik in central Bulgaria from a group of ethnic-Armenian converts to Evangelical Congregationalist Protestantism who felt they were not receiving sufficient spiritual support from the American Missionary Board in Istanbul. The Kazanluk group later became Baptist en masse. According to informants, the church was expropriated during the Communist Party period and turned into a "Temple of Atheism" (i.e., a center for the promotion of atheism). The building was returned to the Baptist Union in 1992 and was reopened in 1993.

Access to the church is via a deep, oblong, fenced-in courtyard (roughly 30 by 20 meters) facing the street. The building is bordered on the left by a monumental and ornate building that formerly housed a lyceum. Whether there was any connection between the lyceum and the church is unknown. On the right, a restaurant presently borders the church.

Structurally, the building follows a rectangular plan (25 by 14 meters), forming a basilica with an apse and bell tower. Stylistically, it juxtaposes a neoclassical façade with a neo-Gothic bell tower. There are additional neo-Gothic decorative elements, including ornamental buttresses and window frames.

The building appears to be primarily brick, but because the front gate was locked at the time of the survey visit, a more detailed description is not possible. No restoration is apparent from the outside, but apparently the church's baptistery was cemented over during the Communist Party period. The building appears to be in good condition with the need of only minor repairs. The roof could not be inspected, nor could evidence of water damage be ascertained, either directly or through local residents. Minor repairs needed include plastering, painting, and the repair of window frames.



Façade, from courtyard.

## Methodist Church

Also known as the Evangelical Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church in the city of Russe was built in 1883 as an Evangelical church. It is predated by the nearby pastor's house, built around 1876 by American missionaries. The church was built with financing from the American Missionary Board. Macedonia-born Methodist leader Zachary Dimitrov, a central figure in the founding and growth of Evangelical Christianity in northern Bulgaria, was pastor of this church for many years.

The Methodist Church in Russe was an important center of Methodist Protestantism in northern Bulgaria and an integral part of the diversity and cosmopolitanism of Russe. Adjacent to the church is the residence of the Catholic Bishop and Russe's synagogue. A Baptist church and an Adventist church are a short walk away.

During the 1990s, the church and pastor's house were joined together into a U-shaped ensemble by the construction of a single-story connecting structure, which in itself is wide enough to serve as a general purpose meeting area. Because the connecting structure abuts the rear of both buildings, it increased the depth of both. During construction of the connecting structure, the original altar wall of the church was removed, thereby elongating the sanctuary by about seven meters.

The complex as a whole still comprises the pastor's residence, as well as offices and meeting rooms and the church itself. It is owned by the Methodist Evangelical Episcopal Church of Bulgaria and is in excellent condition.

Both the church and the pastor's house are set in a fenced courtyard directly accessible from the street. The church is a stone neo-Gothic basilica with a central bell tower. Before the connecting structure was built and the sanctuary extended, it measured approximately 9 by 12 meters; now it measures approximately 9 by 19 meters. The pastor's house is a square (13 by 13 meters). It is a Secessionist residence made of brick and stucco, a lower-Danubian mansion typical of post-Ottoman Bulgaria. The connecting structure is seven meters wide and spans the full width of church and pastor's house and the former 10-meter gap between them. The courtyard runs the full 40-meter width of the plot and is 10 meters deep from the street line to the façades of church and pastor's house. The structure demonstrates excellent workmanship, while the stylistic juxtaposition of an Anglo-Saxon-seeming church with a more Ottoman-style pastor's house makes this an interesting symbol of trends and developments of the time.



**Façade from street.**



**Pastor's house, from street.**

## **Samokov**

### **Evangelical Congregational Church**

The Evangelical Congregational Church of Samokov, a city of more than 10,000 people, is set in a large plot measuring approximately 35 by 20 meters and was originally the students' chapel of the American College at Samokov, a Congregationalist institution. Dated to the 1880s, the college is no longer in existence and was sold to British missionaries in the 1920s. The chapel (the present-day church) has functioned without major interruptions since its founding and is currently owned by the Congregational Church, though whether locally or nationally is unclear.

A pastor's house with a kitchen was built onto one of the lateral walls of the church in the 1980s. Sometime early in the Communist Party period, an interior wall was built to divide the sanctuary in two to conserve heat during the winter. This wall has since been partially opened.

Major restoration early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century followed a fire that destroyed the church's bell tower and second story. A partial restoration of the sanctuary was made in 1983 and there has been subsequent maintenance.

The site is set back slightly from the street and can be accessed directly from it. The building plan is rectangular (11.5 by 8.2 meters), with its main entrance on the short side and a partially opened dividing wall placed approximately midway along the length. The single-nave, pitched-roof basilica (4.2 meters to interior ceiling, and approximately 6 meters to the highest point of the pitched roof) is preceded by a small pitched-roof vestibule structure. It is made of brick, wood, and mud, and has a tiled roof. Other than a stucco finish on the exterior, it is free of ornamentation.

The condition of the building was good, with the exception of slight evidence of dampness in the walls. The building was built without a foundation, but a poured concrete footing appears to maintain the stability of the walls.



**View from the street. Note that a pitched attic had been about two meters higher in the original structure. The second story and the bell tower (originally at the left of the church) were destroyed in a fire a century ago.**



**Full length of sanctuary facing recently opened dividing wall and altar.**

## **Shumen**

### **Methodist Pastor's House**

Located in the city of Shumen and possibly constructed during the Ottoman period, when the city was still called by its Turkish name, Shumla, the Methodist pastor's house is a free-standing residential building with a traditional symmetric interior around a central stairway. It predates the 1895 construction of the church, as an insurance coverage plaque mounted on the façade and dated 1891 indicated that the building was constructed no later than that date. The same former innkeeper who donated the present site to the Methodist Church may have built this house.

Access to the simple, two-story residential structure is from the street and into an iron-fenced courtyard. The interior layout is typical of 19<sup>th</sup> century Balkan adaptation of Turkish domestic architecture, with its symmetrical grouping of rooms around a central stairway. It measures approximately 11 by 13 meters and is made of cut stone and brick, with a wooden roof and dome. There are neo-Gothic decorative elements to its ornamentation.

Since it stands on the same plot of land as the church, the pastor's house was also taken from the Methodist Church by the city governments under eminent domain during the 1970s to construct the adjacent Hotel Shumen. The church was recompensed for the seizure by the grant of a plot of land across the street from the pastor's house, on which the church built a hospice during the 1990s.

Methodist church buildings (and related properties) in Bulgaria are owned by the Methodist Church in Bulgaria/United Methodist Church Worldwide. The house is currently unused.

The house is in extremely poor condition. Its walls and ceilings have been damaged by moisture, both from apparent leakage from the roof and through the walls. Its weight-bearing walls are unstable due to damage from dampness, and more crucially, the subsidence of the ground due to a high water table and the presence of underground streams. The building could benefit from a total restoration. However, the poor condition of the building, together with the problems of the high water table and of subsidence, might make restoration more expensive than demolishing the building and replacing it with a new structure. In addition, the interior layout of the present building limits its usefulness to the church and the community it serves.

The success of the church's medical clinic and hospice, as well as its need for extra space, convinced the local pastor that the pastor's house could be better replaced with a structure suitable to both church and community functions. The future of the pastor's house represents a case study in balancing historical preservation, contemporary needs, and costs. Replacement of the pastor's house with a modern structure of similar dimensions would preserve the appearance of the ensemble it forms with the church while possibly better serving the needs of both the church and the community.



**Façade.**





**Lower left of façade indicating condition of the exterior walls.**

## **Methodist Church**

This is a beautiful historic church that still serves as a living monument. During the mid 1990s, the church was renovated and a four-meter-long extension was built onto the rear of the sanctuary. Due to problems with moisture in the walls (the exterior surface is sealed, preventing evaporation) and in the ground (a very high water table), as well as construction errors, the sanctuary largely collapsed, leaving fully intact only the original bell tower and the vestibule within it.

Methodist missionaries arrived in Shumen in the 1860s. At first, they provided medical assistance to the local populace. Slowly, a congregation formed. According to sources, the site of the church was donated by an individual after he became a Christian. The site also contained the building that eventually became the pastor's house.

This generous gesture also had a problematic side. The site was at the side of a stream. Although the stream was filled in early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is now one of Shumen's main traffic thoroughfares, natural patterns of subterranean drainage persist and the site has a very high level of groundwater, which often floods the basement and could pose a long-term threat to the stability of the church.

Over the years, intolerance and envy also threatened the Methodist presence and the church itself. During the early years of Bulgarian independence, a number of local Orthodox clergy and laymen are said to have written to Prime Minister Stefan Stambolov asking that Methodists be expelled from Shumen. It is said that Stambolov, a graduate of Robert College in Istanbul, pointedly wrote back that those who did not like Evangelists should themselves leave Shumen.

During the Communist Party period, Shumen remained a stronghold of Evangelical Christianity. The Shumen Church was one of only three Methodist churches allowed to remain open; the others were at Khotantsa and Russe. For much of the period, the pastor at Shumen was Simeon Popov, who was imprisoned in Bulgaria's infamous prison camp on Belene Island in the Danube for a number of years following the "Pastors' Trial" of 1948.

In 1982, a large portion of the church's grounds were seized by the municipality under its powers of eminent domain and used as the site of what is now Shumen's major hotel. After completion of the hotel, a number of members of the local government and Communist Party attempted to condemn the church for demolition on the grounds that it was sited too close to the hotel. Pastor Popov, with the support of a number of Shumen-born Communist Party members with an appreciation for the history and heritage of their city, fought the measure and succeeded in saving the church by asking for and obtaining National Monument status for the building.

The church had been compensated for the seized of part of its grounds with an adjacent plot that it used after the Communist Party period to construct a modern hospice building.

The condition of the building is good, but there are some problems with dampness, including periodic flooding of the basement due to high groundwater. There is also evidence of excessive dampness on walls of the vestibule, probably caused by seepage from the roof of the bell tower.



**Façade. Note hotel in background. Following construction of the hotel, an attempt was made by some local officials to condemn and raze the church. Clergy and Shumen-born Communist Party members joined forces to foil the plan.**



**Interior, facing altar. The slightly wider section beginning just beyond the wall-mounted sconces is the extension added to sanctuary during the 1990s.**

## **Strakhilovo**

### **Former Methodist Evangelical Church**

A former Methodist Evangelical Church, now in ruins, is located in the village of Strakhilovo, north of Veliko Turnovo on the road to Svishtov. The church and attached pastor's house were built in the 1890s. According to local residents, the church was established by two Swiss Methodist missionaries seeking to evangelize the area. They chose Strakhilovo for its location midway between the American churches at Svishtov and Veliko Turnovo. The dilapidated complex is currently owned by the Methodist Church. The church itself is a rectangular, single-nave basilica preceded by a vestibule that once supported a bell tower. It is followed by the pastor's house that was built onto the altar wall of the sanctuary.

The church building is seven-by-six meters. The pastor's house measures six-by-four meters.



**Shed, pastor's house, and sanctuary from an angle.**



**Interior of sanctuary as seen from vestibule. Gap in altar wall affords view into pastor's house.**

## **Veliko Turnovo**

### **Evangelical Methodist Church**

Veliko Turnovo (ul. Hristo Ivanov Voivodata 8), not far from the “Tsarevetz,” is a major tourist destination and the site of the fortified medieval city of Veliko Turnovo. The Evangelical Methodist Church was built in 1859 (the date 1858 over the uphill, second-story entrance refers to the founding of the Evangelical Methodist church at V. Turnovo). The covered porch may be original or a somewhat later addition. A bell tower (no longer extant) in the yard may also have been a later addition. Superficial repairs were carried out during the mid-1990s.

The structure was originally built as a pastor's residence, specifically as the Veliko Turnovo residence of Dr. Albert Long, a seminal figure in the spread of Evangelical Protestantism in Bulgaria, linguist, co-translator of the Bible (King James edition) into contemporary Bulgarian, and, later, rector of Robert College, Istanbul. The pastor's house was nationalized in 1949, and from then until 1994 served as the offices of a municipal agency (building fund). Since 1996, the building has served as the Evangelical Methodist “Molitven Dom” (house of prayer) at Veliko Turnovo. At present, the uphill portion serves as church, church office, and Sunday school; the lower story is rented out as an apartment to the building's caretaker.

Access to the building is through a fenced-in yard. The building is a typical Europeanized version of Balkan-Turkish layout (rooms grouped around central stairs; protruding bay at

center of façade; roofed terrace at rear). It is roughly 12-by-12 meters, with a roofed terrace roughly 4-by-12 meters. The building consists of two stories and a total of eight rooms. A room at the rear of the second story, running the full width of the building, serves as sanctuary. It is built mostly of brick with a stone foundation or skirting.

### **Historical Significance**

From a historical point of view, this is a very important monument. Dr. Long was the first resident of the building and lived in it for two and a half decades, at a time crucial to the development of Bulgarian national identity and statehood. Dr. Long moved out of the building in the early 1880s to return to Istanbul to take up his appointment as rector of Robert College. Not only was Dr. Long a driving force in the spread of Evangelical Christianity in Bulgaria, he was also a contributor to the building of Bulgarian cultural, political, and educational institutions (including the Young Women's College at Lovech). Not least, Dr. Long was an active advocate for the cause of Bulgarian independence from the Ottoman Empire.

Dr. Long, together with the Congregational missionary Dr. Riggs, and a number of distinguished Bulgarian literary figures, translated, published, and distributed the first Bible available in modern Bulgaria. This achievement was important for the spread of Evangelical Protestantism. It also contributed to the overall religious awakening in Bulgaria in the years following the establishment of the Bulgarian church and to the shaping of Bulgarian as a modern literary language. Much of the work on the translation of the Bible was done at the pastor's house at Veliko Turnovo.

It is said that Dr. Long moved to Turnovo from Shumen because the Bulgarian language as spoken at Turnovo was purer than at Shumen, his previous residence. Just as likely a cause is the fact that Turnovo was the epicenter of Bulgarian political and cultural life during the years preceding the end of Ottoman rule, just as it was the site of the founding of the first government and constitution of the independent Bulgarian state following the Russo-Turkish War. During his stay at Turnovo, Dr. Long was a liberal donor to Bulgarian institutions. It is said that he donated 100 gold leva (Bulgarian currency) toward the construction of the *chitalishte* (public room and educational/cultural center).

The condition of the church is poor, and fairly extensive repairs are required. The roof and ceilings are leaking, the first floor rooms are wet and damp, and the cellar is filled with water. External plasterwork is damp and exfoliating.



**First story entrance and façade of building. Note signs of dampness.**



**Sanctuary at rear of second floor, view facing pulpit and windows in lateral wall.**

### **Former Evangelical House of Prayer (“Molitven Dom”)**

The former Methodist Evangelist prayer house is located on the main thoroughfare in the old town of Veliko Turnovo, not far from the Methodist pastor’s house. The site contained a house of prayer and an adjacent dormitory for nurses in training. The complex is said to have been built during the tenure of Dr. Albert Long at Turnovo, i.e.,

sometime between the late 1850s and the early 1880s. Its façade appears to be that of an earlier commercial structure that was then converted to serve as a church and residence. The building is presently a ruin owned by the Municipality of Veliko Turnovo, although ownership has been challenged without success by the Methodist Church.

The stone and brick ruin stands on steeply sloping terrain and occupies roughly 25 meters of street frontage. It can be reached from street and via a walkway from above. The future of the site is uncertain, though it is an integral part of the historic ensemble of buildings associated with the establishment of Protestantism in Bulgaria in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



**Remains of façade from right.**



**The ruin from above.**



**Appendix I: Agreement between the United States and  
Bulgaria**



**AGREEMENT**  
**BETWEEN**  
**THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF**  
**AMERICA**  
**AND**  
**THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**  
**ON**  
**THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION**  
**OF CERTAIN CULTURAL PROPERTIES**

The Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria (hereafter referred to as Parties) - -

*Desirous* of successful mutual cooperation in the fields of culture and cultural heritage of either state,

*Convinced* that such an agreement will contribute to the strengthening of numerous contacts between the two states,

*Bearing* in mind the respect due to fundamental human rights, and seeking to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups,

*Convinced* that each culture has a dignity and a value which must be respected and preserved, and that all cultures form part of the common heritage belonging to all mankind,

*Desiring* to enhance the protection of cultural heritage and provide access to the treasures of national and world culture without discrimination,

*Considering* that deterioration or disappearance of items of the cultural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world,

*Considering* that the protection of cultural heritage can be effective only if organized both nationally and internationally among states working in close cooperation,

*Considering* the principles of the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and

*Desirous* of elaborating concrete steps in furtherance of the principles and purposes of the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,

*Have agreed as follows:*

#### **ARTICLE 1**

Each Party will take appropriate steps to protect and preserve the cultural heritage of all national, religious, or ethnic groups (hereafter referred to as "groups") that reside or resided in its territory, including victims of genocide during the Second World War.

The term "cultural heritage" for the purposes of this Agreement means places of worship, sites of historical significance, monuments, cemeteries, and memorials to the dead, as well as archival and other authentic and documentary materials relating thereto.

#### **ARTICLE 2**

The Parties shall cooperate in identifying lists of appropriate items falling within the scope of Article 1, particularly those which are in danger of deterioration or destruction. Either Party may publish such lists.

#### **ARTICLE 3**

Each Party will ensure that there is no discrimination, in form or in fact, against the cultural heritage of any group referred to in Article 1 or against the nationals of the other Party in the scope and application of its laws and regulations concerning:

- (a) the protection and preservation of their cultural heritage;
- (b) the right to contribute to the protection and preservation of their cultural heritage; and
- (c) public access thereto.

#### **ARTICLE 4**

In cases where the group concerned, referred to in Article 1, is unable, on its own, to ensure adequate protection and preservation of its cultural heritage, each Party shall take special steps to ensure such protection and preservation of cultural heritage within its territory and shall invite the cooperation of the other Party and its nationals where assistance is required for this purpose.

#### **ARTICLE 5**

Properties of cultural heritage, referred to in Article 4, that are of special significance shall be designated in the lists of items of cultural heritage. Such lists shall be publicly announced and communicated to competent federal, state, and local authorities.

All properties of cultural heritage so designated shall be protected, preserved, and marked in the manner stipulated by valid legal internal regulations of either Party. Public access thereto shall be ensured.

Such lists of items of cultural heritage shall be designated by the Commission referred to in Article 6 hereof. The Commission may also designate properties for inclusion in the list at any time.

#### **ARTICLE 6**

A Joint Cultural Heritage Commission is hereby established to oversee the operations of the lists referred to in Articles 2 and 5, and to perform such other functions as are delegated to it by the Parties. Each Party shall appoint not more than three members to the Commission, who may be

assisted by alternates and advisers. Decisions of the Commission shall require the assent of all members. The Parties shall cooperate in supplying the Commission with access to the items of cultural heritage and information necessary for the execution of its responsibilities.

Each Party through its representative on the Joint Cultural Heritage Commission (JCHC) referred to in the first paragraph hereof may request that special arrangements, as appropriate, be worked out under the procedures of the JCHC to protect and preserve the cultural heritage in the territory of the other Party of groups not covered under Article 1, in cases where such cultural heritage is associated with the cultural heritage abroad of citizens of the requesting Party and is in need for any reason of protection and preservation. The other Party will consider steps, within the scope of its laws and regulations, to respond to the request.

The United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad shall be the Executive Agent for implementing this Agreement on the American side. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria shall be the Executive Agent for implementing this Agreement on the Bulgarian side. Either Party may, by diplomatic note to the other, change its Executive Agent.

#### ARTICLE 7

Nothing in this Agreement shall be construed to relieve either Party of its obligations under the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage or any other agreement for the protection of cultural heritage.

#### ARTICLE 8

This Agreement shall be implemented in accordance with the laws and regulations of both countries and the availability of funds.

#### ARTICLE 9

Disputes concerning the interpretation or application of this Agreement shall be submitted to the Agents referred to in the third paragraph of Article 6.

#### ARTICLE 10

This Agreement shall enter into force upon an exchange of notes by which the Parties inform each other about the fulfillment of their respective legal requirements for entry into force. It may be amended by mutual written agreement of the Parties.

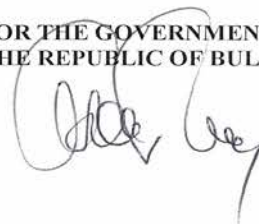
This Agreement shall remain in force until terminated by either Party giving written notice to the other Party through diplomatic channels of its intention to terminate this Agreement, which notice shall be effective six months from the date of delivery.

DONE at ...*Washington D.C.*..., this *5<sup>th</sup>* day of *December* 2002, in duplicate, in the English and Bulgarian languages, each text being equally authentic.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF  
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:



FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA:





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